

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

by

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PREFACE

This thesis attempts to ascertain and record in a systematic form the theology of John Wesley as contained in his prose writings. Whatever claim it may have upon the mind of the reader will lie mainly in the fidelity with which it reports what Wesley's theology actually was. One of the main reasons for undertaking this task lies in the fact that Wesley himself never composed his theology into a formal system. Whoever desires to understand his doctrines in more than a superficial way must assemble them from several volumes of writings. So far as I can discover, no one seems to have done this. (This is doubtless due in part to the fact that only since 1931 has all the source material necessary to such a study been available). There are of course studies of Wesley's theology, but these are almost entirely of two kinds: first, historical works such as biographies, histories of doctrine, church histories, etc., in which Wesley's theology is treated incidentally. Second, doctrinal studies which approach Wesley's thought from the point of view of one or two of his doctrines, e.g. the witness of the Spirit, Christian perfection, the sacraments, etc. Moreover, many of the latter are mainly critical, and not seldom reflect certain predispositions - if not prejudices - in the minds of the authors. This particularly applies to Wesleyan studies published in the nineteenth century. There apparently exists no treatise that objectively records in a detailed and systematic fashion what Wesley's theology actually was.

These considerations provide the main justification for this thesis. At the same time they suggest the principle that has prevailed in its conception and execution: to make it primarily a comprehensive and expository study. That it aspires to be

comprehensive, however, does not mean that it is exhaustive. It has been found impossible to set down every opinion of Wesley. I have accordingly been selective in the use of source material. Nor has it been possible to enter in detail into the derivations of his thought or into the controversies that defined it, except in so far as they illuminate the content or significance of a particular doctrine.

Similarly, that this thesis aspires to be expository, does not mean that it is a mere arrangement of facts. It is at the same time interpretative. I have found it necessary to adopt a structure that would lend form to the content of Wesley's theology and within the logic of which it could be elucidated. This structure accounts for the title of this thesis, "The Soteriology of John Wesley". Accordingly, I have conceived my task to be a study of Wesley's theology as a theology of salvation. The reasons that so persuaded me will be discussed presently. It will suffice to remark here that the soteriological approach was suggested by Wesley himself, by the spirit as well as by the letter of his theology. To interpret his thought from the soteriological point of view, however, implies that one be concerned to ascertain the answer to a question which the soteriological approach⁴ itself poses: Wherein lay the power of Wesley's theology so successfully to recover life for God? To what was due its capacity to initiate the eighteenth century revival? Therefore, while this thesis is primarily an exposition of Wesley's thought, it is further defined as a study in the significance of his reply to the appeal eternally made to the Christian faith: "What must I do to be saved"?

The source material on which this study is based is found in the standard editions of Wesley's Journal and Letters, in his

collected Works, and in the Notes Upon The New Testament (abbreviated in references as Notes). The Hymns have been used only for illustrative purposes because studies of Wesleyan theology as contained in its hymns have already been made, and because it is practically impossible to distinguish between the hymns written by John and Charles Wesley. I have accompanied the expository text of the thesis with a fairly elaborate apparatus of reference footnotes. I have done so in order to indicate the most important passages in Wesley's writings relevant to a given point. The footnotes of course do not constitute a complete index. However, the index to the Works is quite inadequate; that found in the Letters does not refer to the Journal or Works, nor vice versa. It is possible, therefore, that a considerable part of whatever value this thesis may have will lie in the reference footnotes.

It is also necessary that one small point of composition be explained. It concerns the capitalization of pronouns referring to the members of the Trinity. Pronouns referring to God the Father have been capitalized; those to Christ have not been capitalized; those referring to the Holy Spirit have been put in the neuter gender. One is not to infer from these usages that the author has solved the mystery of the Trinity. They have been adopted merely for the sake of clarity.

I wish in conclusion to signify my gratitude to those who have helped me in my work, first of all to Prof. John Baillie of the New College, Edinburgh, under whose direction this study has been carried on for the past two years. I am also indebted to Prof. R. N. Flew of Wesley House, Cambridge; to Prof. Hugh Watt of the New College, Edinburgh; to Dr. H. Maldwyn Hughes, Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge; and to Dr. Cyril Richardson of the Union Theological Seminary, New York City. I must further acknowledge

my gratitude to those whose scholarly work on Wesleyan literature has made possible this thesis. Were it not for the labour of such men as Nehemiah Curnock, the editor of Wesley's Journal, John Telford, the editor of the Letters, and of others unknown to me, equally able and devoted, living and dead, my work would not have been possible.

After having read proof on the following pages, I feel compelled to add the hope that the reader will not be too greatly inconvenienced by the numerous corrections, especially those of punctuation. The type-script from which this copy was made was not accurately followed. I have done the best I could under the circumstances; I fear, however, that minor errors remain.

P. W. H.

INTRODUCTION

The point of view from which one approaches the theology of John Wesley is crucial. One may bring all energy to a study of his thought and yet fail to penetrate its significance precisely because the point of view from which it is surveyed is misconceived. It will not do, for example, to suppose that Wesley's theology is highly speculative and to proceed to arrange it in accord with the schemata of a theological text-book. To compress it into the wrong theological mould inevitably distorts and injures its truth. Whoever wishes to enter into the truths that made possible Wesley's ministry and the church that bears his name, must receive from his own mind and spirit the key of admission. It is a key, indeed, that admits one to an understanding of every province of his life, his churchmanship, his missionary adventure, his studies, his preaching, friendships, as well as of his theology. It is a key that is as necessary to the biographer as to the theologian. It is, simply, "to save souls alive",¹ "to make Christians",² "in one word, salvation".³ Salvation is the systematic idea of Wesley's theology. Only when his doctrines are translated from pages of sermons, of letters and of treatises in terms of this key idea, do they fall into place and assume their proper significance. For this main reason, this thesis has been entitled the "soteriology" - as distinguished from the "theology" - of John Wesley.

This point of view has been dictated by three considerations,

1. Works vii, 124 "On Visiting The Sick".
2. Letters vi, 34, July 30, 1773.
3. Works vi, 43 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

first, by the practical character of all Wesley's thinking upon religion, which in turn determined the character of everything connected with it, in particular the doctrine employed to elucidate it. To Wesley, religion was not a matter of speculation but of life. It was real, not as it implied a set of opinions but as it altered human life. This conviction is defined in the words: "I have one point in view - to promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God to beget, preserve and increase the life of God in the souls of men".¹ This practical, evangelical conception of religion influenced Wesley's doctrine. He never wrote theology merely for its own sake, but as a practical means to an end. One feels that Wesley cared about doctrine for the same reason that he hurried to make a post-chaise for Bristol to keep a preaching appointment, - to save sinners. Theology was undertaken because of the practical every-day necessity of inspiring men and women to offer up their lives to God, that they might become holy people. Any thing that enabled him to do this effectively was welcomed with eagerness. If the publication of a Journal, the translation of a hymn, the penning a "word to a drunkard", the composing of a treatise against predestination, could save people or make them holy, it was done on the spot. Accordingly, he speaks of his theology as "practical divinity".

For the same reason he abstains from "all nice and philosophical speculations". Because his doctrine is designed to convert a Welsh collier as well as an Oxford tutor, he lays down the rule that he will write as well as speak ad populum.² It is not to be understood, however, that he always takes the Welsh collier for a common denominator. One cannot traverse his writings and untangle

1. Letters iii, 192, Sept. 3, 1756.

2. Vide Works v, lff. "Preface To Sermons", and Notes Preface.

his controversies with the theologians of his century, without perceiving the sustained power of his intellect and his rich full grasp of historic Christian thought. Nonetheless, that he chose to define his doctrine in an unstudied transparent fashion, was due to the practical motive which underlay all his activity, "in one word, salvation". One finds it summarized in the laconic remark: "Gaining knowledge is a good thing; but saving souls is a better ... I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul".¹

The second consideration that has led me to approach Wesley from a soteriological point of view is closely akin to the first. It is the experiential character of his theology. Like the preceding consideration, this character is determined by a certain fundamental view of religion. In this case, the view is one which affirms that religion is real when God is experienced in a saving way. This is what he means by the adjective "vital" in the typical sentence we have quoted, "to promote vital, practical religion". To Wesley, theology was the elucidation of an experience through which he had himself passed and through which he had known other people to pass. This experience, however, was specifically one of the Christian religion as it saves people and restores them to life with God. It was not, for example, merely mystical; it was primarily redemptive.

When this view of religion as experience is united with the previous view, that it is practical, one can say: Wesley's theology is formulated with the practical purpose of elucidating the manner in which God communicates salvation to man, and of inspiring such an experience in those to whom Wesley felt commissioned to minister. Accordingly, it becomes apparent that the student

1. Works viii, 304 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

of Wesley's theology must do justice to the views on which it rests. He must make clear how Wesley's theology is designed to "beget, preserve and increase" a redeeming experience of God; or in other words, how Wesley conceives salvation to be achieved in human life.

The third consideration that has persuaded me to adopt the soteriological point of view is of a more specific nature than the other two. It consists in the fact that Wesley himself formally regarded his theology as a theology of salvation. This is intimated by occasional references in which he specifies the manner in which his doctrines are interrelated, and indicates the point of view from which they are to be surveyed. He speaks, for example, of " ... the connected chain of scripture truths ... the natural corruption of man; justification by faith; the new birth; inward and outward holiness"¹. One can best judge, however, how Wesley would have liked a student to systematize his theology by noting the point of view he himself adopted in the arrangement of his standard edition of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists, 1780. It has been pointed out by L. Wiseman that in plan and content this volume is an "unrivalled mirror" of Wesleyan² thought, that it is a kind of poetical Pilgrim's Progress which traces the course of salvation from man's state of natural depravity to the experience of full redemption, Christian perfection. This idea is also suggested in Wesley's own preface to a volume of Hymns published in 1740.³ That Wesley schematized the

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1. Works vii, 284 "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity". Vide also ibid. viii, 46f. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. A New History of Methodism i, 251.
 3. Vide Works xiv, 323ff. "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems".

the theology of his hymns from a soteriological point of view, therefore, indicates that the student may be allowed to do the same with his theology as contained in his prose writings.

When considered against the background of the practical and experiential character of Wesley's theology, this observation suggests the logical ordo salutis that will be followed. Because his theology is an elucidation of a saving experience of God, the subsequent exposition will be most accurate if it employs the categories of that experience. Hence, I have conceived this thesis as a kind of doctrinal drama of man's salvation. At one time I considered the feasibility of recording Wesley's soteriology only up to the point of man's initial acceptance with God. It was found, however, that this would make impossible an accurate understanding of his thought by eliminating its distinctively Wesleyan emphases. It was similarly found that to write only upon the distinctively Wesleyan features and to omit those which are Gemeingut to Protestant thought, would make impossible an appreciation of his theology by virtually dismembering it. The effectiveness of Wesley's theology will be found to lie as much in the contributions made to it by historic Christian thought as in the peculiar impress Wesley himself imparts to it. A discussion, for example, of the doctrine of Christian perfection without a prior knowledge of Wesley's substantially Reformed doctrine of sinful man, would rob his affirmation that "the most profligate sinner can be perfectly saved from all sin, of its peculiar significance. It became clear that the study would have to trace the course of a sinner's salvation from the state of corruption to the state of perfection.

This procedure is imposed upon the reader with some trepidation.

For in recording the doctrines that describe salvation we perforce deal with much familiar material. The chapter on justification, for example, is pure Reformed theology. Yet, it is impossible to omit this doctrine if this thesis is to accomplish its purpose, to record Wesley's theology in a comprehensive fashion. Hence, the patience of the reader is besought.

Accordingly, the first chapter is a discussion of Wesley's doctrine of sinful man. This is immediately followed by the doctrine of grace. These two chapters are rather long because it is important to understand thoroughly Wesley's view of man as the creature God saves, and his view of the nature of grace as it contests against sin for man's soul. These chapters introduce the two central motifs of the thesis, the sin of man and the grace of God. The activity of grace as it wroughts repentance and faith, and justification and regeneration, is described in the third and fourth chapters. As in experience, the sinner's justification (and regeneration and adoption) is witnessed to by the Spirit, so the doctrine of justification/^{is} followed by a treatment of the doctrine of assurance. Similarly, just as salvation includes more than initial acceptance with God, just as it includes that holiness without which no man can live with God, so the doctrines of justification and the witness of the Spirit are followed by the doctrine of sanctification. Finally, as in experience salvation is consummated in communion with God and in ethical love to one's fellow men, so the doctrine of Christian perfection terminates our exposition of Wesley's thought.

We turn, therefore, to Wesley's doctrine of man.

Chapter I
THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

I

Introduction

Wesley's doctrine of man figures prominently in his theology. This observation immediately commends itself to our attention. For, it will be acknowledged that a theology as eminently redemptive as Wesley's must have a well-defined view of the nature of man. It must not only boldly and faithfully set forth the promise of grace. It must also know that with which it has to deal, the wretched and corrupt human soul. One will further grant that the doctrine of man contained in a theology as practical as Wesley's must spring from a first-hand knowledge of what have been called the "brute facts" of human nature. A set of speculative theories about man spun out within the aloofness of a scholar's chamber can not be taken with great seriousness. In fact, in so far as^a doctrine of man is not evolved and tested by a direct appeal to experience, to that extent it may be looked upon with suspicion.

Wesley's theology is commonly spoken of as a "theology of experience". No other doctrine has stronger claim to such a title than the doctrine of man. It was developed in the course of sixty years of ministry in a century whose impiety has become almost proverbial in English history. It was informed by constant reading and sharpened by controversial writing. His observant mind ranged the entire gamut of human life with the energy that always distinguished him; and that Wesley so successfully recovered life for God is hardly less due to his realistic knowledge of "what was in man", than to his announcement

of the promise of grace, "Be ye perfect".

It is necessary, however, that one qualify his doctrine of man as a doctrine of sinful man. This conviction arose not only from his experience of the ravages of sin in human life, nor alone from his study of the scriptures and from a literal acceptance of the Genesis narrative of man's fall. Wesley saw that the logic of salvation required a belief in man as essentially a sinful creature. That is why he included "reason" with "scripture" and "experience" in the title of his treatise on original sin.¹ The nature of salvation demands that man be saved from sin; and Wesley believed that to regard man as not sinful vitiates the necessity of salvation and deprecates the redemptive grace offered in the incarnation and atonement. The priority of sin to salvation in the domain of religious experience has its parallel in the priority of a doctrine of man as sinful to a doctrine of redemption in theology. Those who for one reason or another deny the foundation of original sin, Wesley insists, wreck the whole structure of soteriology. For this reason we commence our exposition of his thought with a discussion of how and why he insisted so vehemently on the palpable fact of sin in human life. In his own words: "If, therefore, we take away this foundation, that man is by nature foolish and sinful, 'fallen short of the glorious image of God', the Christian system falls at once; nor will it deserve so honourable an appellation, as that of a 'cunningly devised fable' ".²

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1. Works ix, 191 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin, According To Scripture, Reason, And Experience".
 2. ibid. ix, 194 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

The Endowments Of Man as a Spirit Created by God

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Man is created through the "mere mercy" of God. The creation of life is indeed fraught with eternal mystery; but in light of the Christian belief that the universe is to be interpreted as love, the creation of man becomes a witness to the love of God. God has graciously created man for Himself, " ... to know, love, and enjoy him", out of His boundless and unmerited love. It is not to be understood, however, that God immediately creates every being except in so far as He is the primum mobile, and has established laws of generation whereby through a power also given by Him, man propagates his own species originally derived from Adam. Hence, although uncertain before the mystery of life, Wesley may be said to embrace a Traducian - as distinguished from a Creational - theory of man's origin.

Three elements constitute man's being, body, soul and spirit. The first in turn is composed of four elements, earth, air, fire and water.

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1. Wesley's doctrine of creation is orthodox. God, as Creator, " ... called out of nothing, by his all-powerful word, the whole universe, all that is". Works vi, 315 "On Divine Providence". Vide also ibid.vi, 206ff. "God's Approbation Of His Works", ibid.vii, 167ff. "What Is Man?", ibid.vii, 225ff. "What Is Man?", ibid.ix, 337 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Letters iii, 343, Jan. 6, 1757, Notes Heb. 11:3.
 2. Works vi, 445 "On Dissipation". Vide also ibid.v, 7 "Salvation By Faith", ibid.vii, 266-67 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", ibid.vii, 337-38 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", ibid.viii, 18 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Vide ibid.vi, 68 "The New Birth", ibid.vi, 222, 224 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid.vi, 239 "God's Love To Fallen Man", ibid.ix, 335ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Journal iv, 468, Feb. 27, 1762, ibid.v, 37-9, Oct. 25, 1763, Notes Rom. 5:19; Heb. 12:9.
 4. Wesley believes the principle of physical life to consist in an harmonious conjunction of these four elements. What he calls ethereal fire may be defined by the modern word "energy", which as the basic substance of matter assumes innumerable forms but is itself indestructible. Wesley speaks of this as edax rerum, the universal menstruum, the discohore of all things. Vide Works vi, 191f. "On Eternity", ibid.vi, 219 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid.vi, 427f. "Spiritual Worship", ibid.vii, 225ff. "What Is Man?".

The soul is distinguished from the spirit in that it is properly a kind of ethereal or electric fire which clothes the spirit. The latter Wesley at one time felt to be a possession only of genuine Christians, the former to be common to all men.¹ In 1786, however, in studying the Pauline trichotomy in I Thess. 5:23, he came to conceive the spirit as the highest principle of the immortal spiritual nature of man, made after the divine image, having its source and destiny in God, created by Him and like an arrow winging its way to Him.² Throughout his writings Wesley uses "soul" and "spirit" interchangeably. Man's spirit partakes of the nature of God and may be said to be an imperfect image of the divine incorruptible glory.³ It is distinguished from other forms of animate life by virtue of its capacity for knowing, loving and obeying God.⁴ As such it is infinitely precious in the sight of God. One human personality - with its spiritual endowments - is more valuable than the entire physical creation. No matter how far it may have forsaken the purpose of its being, no matter how unconscious it may be of the divine image stamped upon it, it is still God's creation; and it is to be honoured both for its own sake and its Creator's.⁵

What Wesley calls the "I" - the self, the ego, the spirit - of a human being is not independent of the physical body.⁶

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1. Compare Notes I Thess. 5:23 (1754) with Works xi, 447f. "Some Thoughts" (1786).
 2. Vide Works v, 3 "Preface To Sermons On Several Occasions", ibid. vii, 145 "On Pleasing All Men", ibid. xi, 447f. "Some Thoughts", Letters vii, 77 Aug. 4, 1781.
 3. Vide Works vi, 190f. "On Eternity", ibid. vii, 171 "What Is Man?", ibid. ix, 291 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Notes Jas. 3:9; II Pet. 3:18.
 4. Vide Works vi, 244, 252 "The General Deliverance".
 5. Vide Works vii, 145f. "On Pleasing All Men", ibid. vii, 171f. "What Is Man?", ibid. viii, 18 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 6. Vide ibid. vi, 94f. "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations", ibid. vi, 26ff. "Wandering Thoughts", ibid. vi, 203-04 "On The Trinity", ibid. vi, 219 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. vi, 477 "On Temptation", ibid. vii, 345ff. "The Heavenly Treasure In Earthen Vessels", ibid. x, 470 "Thoughts Upon Necessity", Letters ii, 251, June 17, 1746, ibid. v, 4,

Each can intimately affect the other for ill and good. This is an important point. For it is the infirmities incident to the mutual influence of body and mind that give rise to defects of conduct, which, though not technically sins, Wesley allows to consist with the state of Christian perfection.¹ Also, the mutual influence of soul and body allows us to understand how he can assert that in an almost literal sense man can hardly move an arm without the power of the Holy Spirit.² For the Holy Spirit, as a kind of divine energy, directly affects the soul of man which in turn intimately affects the body. Thus the Spirit in a sense is a first cause, the soul an efficient cause, which produce effects on the body. In moments of intense religious experience such effects sometimes issue in extraordinary physical behaviour. In accord with this conception, therefore, Wesley does not hesitate to attribute them to the operations of the Holy Spirit.

Man is endowed with certain faculties that make possible his activity as an autonomous being, the first of which is reason, whose operations Wesley conceives (according to Aristotle) as "... Simple apprehension ... conceiving a thing in the mind ... Judgment ... the determining that the things before conceived either agree or differ from each other ... Discourse ... the motion or progress of the mind from one judgment to another".³ Every man possesses at least a degree of reason together with a desire for knowledge, although the rational faculty varies in its efficiency in individuals, is imperfect in its kind and limited in its activity. The desire for knowledge is implanted by God as

1. Vide infra pp. 287-88.

2. Vide Letters ii, 71, June 25, 1746, ibid. iv, 362, Nov. 26, 1762

3. Works vi, 353 "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered". Vide also ibid. xiii, 456 "Remarks On Mr. Locke's Essay On Human Understanding".

a foretaste of heavenly mysteries and as a spur to further zeal, that man may not rest content with his state but press on to "the Source of all knowledge and all excellence",^I God the Creator. The rational faculty functions in religion by having union with the Eternal Reason as its end. The charge is laid upon every soul to direct its divinely-given faculty of reason toward a true knowledge² of God.

The second faculty with which man is endowed is liberty of will.³ God has generously created man in His own image, and to deny to man the quality of freedom that characterizes His own almighty will is to contradict His own nature. Because man bears his Creator's image it is impossible to "...believe the noblest creature in the visible world to be only a fine piece of clock-work".⁴ The Christian doctrine of man, based on Biblical revelation, cannot tolerate determinism either in the form of mechanism or materialism. It is impossible to believe, for example, that the behaviour of the human personality is unalterably determined by vibrations of the "fibres" of the brain, aroused by the impact of stimuli upon the senses. Such a view

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1. Works vi,337 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge".
 2. Vide ibid.viii,12 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid.vii,43 "An Israelite Indeed".
 3. Wesley distinguishes between "will" and "liberty". These are separate faculties of the soul which are often confused with one another. Will is the agency by which one controls one's behaviour. Liberty is not the will itself, nor a property limited to the will alone. It is a quality of freedom of the soul, a faculty of self-determination that characterizes the activity of the whole man, the mind (and body) as well as the will. Yet Wesley implies that liberty is peculiarly necessary to the will, as necessary as the will is in turn to the exercise of the understanding. Each is indispensable to the unity of the soul, and the three, will, liberty and understanding, implement one another and constitute the integrity of the personality. Generally, however, Wesley speaks of liberty of will simply as "free-will", and it is in this sense that we shall understand him. Vide Works vi,215 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid.vi,243 "The General Deliverance", ibid.vi,270 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid.vi,311 "The Signs Of The Times", ibid.vii,228-29 "What Is Man?", ibid.x,468 "Thoughts Upon Necessity".
 4. Ibid.x,457 "Foreword To Thoughts Upon Necessity". Vide also ibid.vii,227 "What Is Man?".

dishonours man's Creator as Christians conceive Him; it offends the Biblical account of man's being; and places in contempt the most priceless thing in the universe, the human soul capable of God.¹ "Therefore, (with reverence be it spoken,) the Almighty cannot do this thing ... He cannot destroy out of the soul of man that image of himself wherein he made him."²

Man's power to act from choice further receives Wesley's support because it provides a necessary basis for the existence of virtue and vice, and the only means of accounting for their reality. If man does not possess the faculty of free will, if his actions are irrevocably determined either by God's decrees (of which we shall treat in chapter two)³ or by the mechanism of nature, he is relieved of moral responsibility, is incapable of good or evil and becomes a neutral being, a puppet. No distinctions between right and wrong are possible. The reality of sin is destroyed, and man is no more a moral agent than the sun, or a stone, which do nothing but blindly and selflessly obey the immutable laws of nature. To deny free will and to accept its logical concomitant, the abolition of vice and virtue, accordingly makes unnecessary any rewards or punishments, thereby dispensing with the fear of divine judgment and the Christian hope of immortality. The appealing grace of the incarnation and atonement is made meaningless and the mission of Christ becomes a trick played by God upon helpless man. Lastly, to deny to men the faculty of free will makes God the author of all

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1. Vide Works vii, 200 "On Faith", ibid. vii, 336 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", ibid. x, 457-59, 468-69, 473-74 "Thoughts Upon Necessity".
 2. Ibid. vi, 318 "On Divine Providence".
 3. Vide infra pp. 89ff.

sin in the universe, and at the same time contradicts His nature as love by asserting that He punishes man for sins for which He Himself alone is responsible. ^I Wesley concludes : God"... deals with you ^{2.} as free agents from first to last".

"It seems, therefore, that every spirit in the universe, as such, is endued with understanding, and, in consequence, with a will, and with a measure of liberty; and that these three are inseparably united in every intelligent creature".³

Every man is also given by God a measure of grace; in "natural" or unregenerate man this grace is prevenient. It is a mark of divine love to all created beings and is designed to constrain man's soul to God. The first function of preventing grace is to inform and enlighten the moral sensibilities, conferring on even the most unregenerate of men "... what is vulgarly termed natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil", ⁴ and providing man with an inward monitor which voices its approbation or disapprobation. ^{5.} The second function of preventing grace is to make possible the free exercise of the will which Wesley believes to be profoundly corrupted by man's share in the sin of Adam, to enable it to choose good as well as evil. We shall presently discuss ⁶ in full the doctrine of preventing grace.

Thus the spirit of man has been blessed by God with the endow-⁷ments of understanding, will, liberty, affections and passions, and ^{with} / a measure of preventing grace. It is in keeping with the grandeur

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1. Vide Works vi,227 "On Predestination", ibid.vii,373ff."Free Grace", ibid.x,224ff "Predestination Calmly Considered",ibid.x,463ff. "Thoughts Upon Necessity".
 2. Ibid.vi,311 "The Signs Of The Times".
 3. Ibid.vi,270 "The End Of Christ's Coming".
 4. Notes John 1:9
 5. Vide Works vii,345 "The Heavenly Treasure In Earthen Vessels".
 6. Vide Infra pp.29ff.
 7. Vide Works vii,226-27 "What Is Man?".

of such a creation that it should be "...clothed with immortality; having no inward principle of corruption, and being liable to no external violence".¹ It is the privilege and duty of man to have as the purpose of his existence, communion with his Father both in time and in eternity. "... God made our heart for himself; and it cannot rest till it resteth in him".² Man is created in order to experience the blessed happiness that God intends every soul to enjoy through communion with Him. For, "knowing that happiness is our common aim, and that an innate instinct continually urges us to the pursuit of it ...",³ "one happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them ...".⁴

It remains to point out that natural man, as the noblest of God's creations, dwells in God in the same manner as all creatures. We shall discuss presently the extent to which sin has alienated him from fellowship with God. We shall find it to be almost insuperable. Yet, because God "... by his intimate presence holds ... all in being,... pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe",⁵ even in a state of natural corruption man shares in God. Although bereft of any personal, spiritual fellowship with Him, he yet moves, and lives, and has his being in God's immanent presence.⁶

1. Vide Works vi, 191 "On Eternity".

2. Ibid. vi, 431 "Spiritual Worship". Vide also ibid. v, 206-07 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vi, 445 "On Dissipation", ibid. vii, 43 "An Israelite Indeed", ibid. vii, 229f. "What Is Man?".

3. Notes Matt. 5:2.

4. Works v, 207 "The Circumcision Of The Heart". Vide also ibid. vi, 433 "Spiritual Worship", ibid. vii, 266 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".

5. Ibid. v, 283 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - iii". Vide also ibid. vi, 315ff. "On Divine Providence", ibid. vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", ibid. vii, 238ff. "On The Omnipresence Of God".

6. Vide ibid. vii, 511 "On The Holy Spirit", Notes Acts 17:27-8.

Finally, in the belief that all life is God's and that man's immortal soul owes its existence and sustenance to divine grace, we find the foundation of Wesley's theology as a theology of claim. Man is not to look upon himself as his own. He is God's, and every activity of his physical, intellectual and spiritual life is to be conducted with the single purpose of increasing his awareness of and communion with Him who has pronounced a loving claim on all life in creating and sustaining it. Man is true to the nature of his soul and to the love of God in having created it in so far as he responds with his entire self-hood to the claim of the divine upon him. We shall later find Wesley appealing to this truth as a means of imposing upon man the constraint of divine love. The New Testament figure is that of a steward who disposes of all that he has been given in accord with his master's will. This is true of Wesley's doctrine of created man. Man is to love and obey God with his entire personality because God has first loved him in creating and endowing him with a body, soul, reason and free will. His own life is a sacred thing, the lives of all other created beings are also sacred, and in the dedication of his complete self to God, his life and happiness are realized.^I

III

Man a Sinful Being

Beside the picture drawn in the preceding section we must place another, that of man as a sinful being. There has come into the composition of human nature a principle of evil which corrupts and throws into disharmony its constituent faculties. A satanic agency has overcome man. Although he still possesses in varying degrees the divine

I. The sermon on "The Good Steward", Works vi, 136ff., excellently defines the relation of Wesley's doctrine of created man to his general theological position. Vide also ibid. vi, 468 "On Leaving The World", ibid. vii, 338 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart".

endowments of an immortal spirit, there is resident in him an insidious and deep-rooted moral infection that renders him, even though a child of God, a wicked and depraved creature. Something has happened and is happening to man's soul that destroys his awareness of the divine claim upon his life, that distracts him from the true purpose of his being, and plunges one who does realize his plight into despair before the holiness of God. That "something" is sin. Its power is so terrible that of himself man is totally unable to conquer it. It is so universal in its existence and activity that no created soul is free from it. It is so mysteriously profound in man's nature that only the Bible can account for it. It is the fact of human nature, and to judge from the importance Wesley attaches to it, the reality of sin must bulk largest in any consideration of the doctrine of man.

i

The Reality of Sin Established
and
Explained by Scripture

The reality of sin in man's being is established and explained on the basis of scripture and experience. We now turn to Wesley's doctrine of man as a sinful creature, as founded on Biblical revelation.

Wesley's use of scripture is clearly pre-critical. He accepts literally the Genesis narrative of the creation and fall of Adam. Adam, created in the natural, political and moral image of God, endowed with understanding, will and liberty, owed unswerving obedience to the moral law, the covenant of works which God had pledged him to observe.

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1. Vide Works v,54 "Justification By Faith", ibid. vi,66f. "The New Birth", ibid. vi,215,222f. "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. vi,242ff. "The General Deliverance", ibid. vi,269ff. "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. ix, 293,344,434ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Vide ibid. v,54 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v,66ff. "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v,435ff. "The Original, Nature, Property And Use Of The Law", ibid. v,453 "The Law Established Through Faith", ibid. ix, 403, 434f. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

As their "common head and representative",¹ the fate of all mankind depended upon his behaviour. But having a power of choosing either to obey or disobey God through the exercise of his free will, "he chose evil"² and sinned. The act of original sin was provoked by Satan in the guise of a serpent to whose temptings Adam consciously and willingly yielded. He opposed his self-will against God's and transgressed the law to which he owed perfect obedience.³

Wesley variously describes Adam's sin as unbelief, self-will, atheism, pride, idolatry, ingratitude, irreverence, disobedience, sensuality and robbery.⁴ These are instructive for us only in so far as they indicate the essence of all sin as Wesley conceived it, the self-alienation of man's soul from God, a deliberate disposition on the part of the human creature by which communion with God is broken and the purpose of man's being is frustrated. It is also to be noted that the entrance of sin into the creation, i.e. moral evil, is referred to the creature Adam, and that its source is Satan.

Wesley employs the ideology of the fifth chapter of Romans to show how the consequences of Adam's sin are transmitted to posterity, first, through the peculiar relation he bore toward mankind in that God had fixed upon him (as federal head) a moral responsibility for their destiny.⁵ Secondly, Adam's sin is bequeathed to man because

1. Notes Rom. 5:19. Vide also Works ix, 332-34, 352 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
2. Works vi, 215 "On The Fall Of Man".
3. Vide ibid. vi, 216f., 223 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. ix, 345 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
4. Vide ibid. vi, 67-8 "The New Birth", ibid. vi, 217, 223 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. vi, 271-72 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. vii, 338f. "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", ibid. ix, 242, 378, 417 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
5. Vide ibid. ix, 256-57, 262, 379-80, 418, 458 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Notes Rom. 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:45, 47.

we have proceeded by physical generation from him. We were all in the loins of our first parent. The sin which entered his nature at the fall is transmitted to his offspring who are likewise rendered destitute of the favour and image of God.¹

As inherited by man, sin bears a triple aspect. First, its guilt is imputed. By guilt is meant liability to punishment as distinguished from punishment itself or from the reality of sin that occasions it. "All men then are deemed sinners in the eye of God, on account of that one sin ..."² Secondly, actual punishment itself is inflicted on posterity. By punishment Wesley means " ... evil, suffered on account of sin",³ experienced by man in the form of pain and death. That pain is punishment is proved by reference to the divine curse passed upon the first parents whereby suffering is made a penalty for their sin, inflicted both on themselves and on succeeding generations.⁴ This likewise

1. Vide Works ix, 262, 275-82, 378, 421, 423, 438f. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Wesley defends this view against the charge of an opponent (Dr. John Taylor, against whom he wrote his treatise on original sin,) that since God is the author of physical life and man is sinful, God must be regarded as the author of sin. Wesley confesses that he can describe how sin is transmitted by physical birth without being derived from God, no better than he can penetrate the mystery of physical generation itself. But that he cannot understand these things, he continues, does not invalidate their truth. Although God is the author of the power whereby the human species is propagated from Adam, yet He who " ... supplies the power whereby a sinful nature is propagated (according to the fixed rules established in the lower world) is not chargeable with the sinfulness of that nature". Wesley admits that "impenetrable darkness" rests on the subject. Yet he is as " ... sure of this, as ... that there is a God ..." (Works ix, 335-37 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".) He also denies that because the act of physical generation transmits sin, it itself is sinful. (Vide p. 282 of the same work.)
2. Ibid. ix, 256. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
3. Ibid. ix, 264. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
4. Vide Works ix, 323 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. vi, 215f. "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. vi, 235 "God's Love To Fallen Man". The scriptural statement that pain is punishment is authenticated by reference to the universal pain (and death) that afflicts mankind, which is interpreted as evidence of the punishment first announced to Adam. The fact that pain is universal adds credibility to the Biblical account and cogency to the proof from the experience of mankind. Vide ibid. ix, 321-22 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

applies to death, the second form of punishment executed on posterity, even on those who have not sinned " ... after the likeness of Adam's transgression"¹. Man became liable first to death of the body, implied in the words, "... dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"². Secondly, man's soul became subject to death eternal at the same time that it became void of the divine image. Through the infection derived from Adam all have been made dead in sin, dead in trespasses against God's holiness, by nature incapable of communion with Him.³ As spiritual life is communion with God, so spiritual death is separation from God. Although the spiritual principle common to all human existence remained in man, he was totally deprived of that which alone constitutes any degree of genuine spiritual life, personal fellowship with God.

The most important consequence of Adam's sin for posterity, however, is that the reality of sin has actually been infused into our nature. We are not only deemed sinners, we are sinners.⁴ Original sin is not only imputed, it is inherent. All outward sins are but manifestations of the deeper reality of inward sin that pervades and infects man's entire being to such an extent that he may truthfully be said to be a child of Satan. Men are by nature utterly devoid of God, "α ὅλος", 'in the world'.⁵ This original wickedness is more than a habit or an inclination. It is a root, a fountain of iniquity that diffuses its contagion all through

1. Rom. 5:14.

2. Gen. 3:19. Vide Works v, 55 "Justification By Faith", ibid. ix, 315 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

3. Vide Works ix, 240ff., 258 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Wesley again buttresses the scripture sentence of death by appealing to the reality of death within the experience of mankind. The fact that all men die proves that all are being punished. But punishment could not be incurred if men were not in some sense guilty of sin. Hence, the universal reality of death proves the fact of sin, and verifies the scripture assertion of the imputation of sin to all.

4. Vide Works ix, 248, 264ff., 273ff., 311, 390ff., 419ff. "The Doctrine of Original Sin", ibid. viii, 277 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

5. Ibid. ix, 283 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

the being of man. In fact, Wesley believed so vigorously that the will in particular was corrupted by Adam's sin, and wrote so excessively of its bias toward evil, as to lay himself open to the charge of determinism. For example: "Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption".¹ It was argued against him that to conceive man's will as totally corrupt and by nature disinclined to all good, forces one to believe that " ... men are no moral agents".² Wesley rescued himself from this attack by a doctrine of preventing grace which asserts that only through the external, supernatural assistance of God,³ can natural man will or do what is pleasing to God. We shall discuss this in a later section. The significance of this attack, however, must not be lost upon us. It lies not so much in Wesley's answer, as in the observation that his doctrine of sin was such as to provoke a charge of determinism. It is likely that we are here dealing with one of those points in his theology where "the true gospel" comes within a "hair's breadth" of Calvinism,⁴ and we may judge from this reflection the extent to which Wesley believed man to be naturally depraved through his membership in Adam.

1. Works vi, 107 "Self Denial".

2. Ibid. ix, 273 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". We call attention to a letter Wesley wrote June 28, 1755, which reflects the delicacy of his position on this point. It seems that in revising his Notes On The New Testament, of the fifth chapter of Romans, he found a comment which "... seemed to assert such an imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity as might make way for the 'horrible decree' of election, reprobation, I therefore struck it out immediately; as I should willingly do whatsoever should appear to be any way inconsistent with that grand principle, 'The Lord is loving to every man...' " Letters iii, 134.

3. Vide Works ix, 273f., 286 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

4. Ibid. viii, 284 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversation".

The Reality of Sin Established
and
Explained by Experience

Having demonstrated that man is congenitally a sinful creature on the basis of scripture, Wesley next appeals to the reality of sin as it manifests itself within the experience of man in order to confirm and authenticate the truth of Biblical revelation. He first turns to past civilizations and examines the ("heathen") literature of ancient times,¹ together with Biblical history, to prove that sin characterized man from the time of Adam to the time that Christ came into the world,² and persisted throughout our Lord's ministry and the age of the apostles.³ The reality of sin continued to be operative in the second century and prevailed on through the Reformation to present times.⁴ Wesley then demonstrates the reality of sin

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1. Wesley cites Juvenal, Virgil, Horace and Lucan to display the sins that characterized the more decadent epochs of ancient Roman life. Vide Works ix, 199-200, 202-08, 363-64 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". ibid.
 2. Vide vi, 9 "Christian Perfection", ibid. vi, 253-54 "The Mystery Of Iniquity", ibid. viii, 137ff. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. vii, 176f. "On Attending The Church Service", ibid. ix, 196ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". A favourite text of Wesley's in this connection is Gen. 6:5; "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually", a text used with great effect in the sermon, "Original Sin", Works vi, 56-8.
 3. That sin characterized even the first Christian communities Wesley proves from the exhortations and admonitions of the apostolic epistles. The increase of sin among the early believers constrained God finally to allow them to be persecuted which for a while restored a more ethical and vital religion. Vide ibid. vi, 256-60 "The Mystery Of Iniquity", ibid. vi, 328 "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels".
 4. Although persecution from time to time lessened the power of sin, the crowning blow to Christianity was the conversion of Constantine and the consequent luxury and respectability the church enjoyed in Rome. "Then, not the golden but the iron age of the Church commenced". Works vi, 262 "The Mystery Of Iniquity". Vide also ibid. vii, 163-64 "Of Former Times".

within the contemporary experience of man by reviewing "heathen civilisations"¹ and those which claim to be Christian.² Then like Amos circling nearer home, he portrays the wide-spread iniquity of Ireland and Scotland, of the peasants of England, then of the courts, army and navy, tradesmen and merchants, nobility and gentry; and he concludes that all, even church members and clergy - not except-³ing the Methodists - are unholy and sinful. He summarily asserts: "... we may boldly say, that wherever Christianity has spread, the apostasy has spread also; insomuch that, although there are now, and always have been, individuals who were real Christians; yet the whole world never did, nor can at this day, show a Christian country or city".⁴

In this fashion Wesley brings the case for original sin to the court of fact. The Biblical assertion of original sin is proved by its universality in experience. For only if sin be generic to the human race can it be universal. Similarly, because it is universal it must be generic. Hence the Biblical doctrine of original sin explains its universality, and its universality establishes the Biblical doctrine of its originality.

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1. Wesley accepts the statement of a contemporary that one can claim as nominally Christian only five out of thirty parts into which the world may be supposed to be divided. Vide Works vi, 277ff. "The General Spread Of The Gospel", ibid. vi, 344f. "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge", ibid. vii, 282f. "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity", ibid. ix, 208ff., 363 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Wesley examines Christianity as it is found in the Greek, Catholic and Protestant communions. He finds, however, that the wickedness of Greek Christians is only exceeded by the unchastity, Deism and organized murder of Catholicism, and in the next breath says that the Protestant and Reformed peoples are not one whit behind the latter in all manner of sin! Vide Works vi, 279 "The General Spread Of The Gospel", ibid. vii, 283f. "Causes Of The Inefficacy of Christianity", ibid. vii, 340 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", ibid. ix, 217-21 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 3. Vide ibid. vii, 284f. "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity", ibid. viii, 147ff. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. ix, 224-30 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Ibid. vi, 263 "The Mystery Of Iniquity".

"The fact then being undeniable, I would ask, How is it to be accounted for?... Profane history gives us a large account of universal wickedness ... for above two thousand years last past. Sacred history adds the account of above two thousand more ... Let us then have recourse to the oracles of God. How do they teach us to account for this fact? ... They teach us, that 'in Adam all die'".¹

The next realm of experience to receive Wesley's attention as evidence for the present fact of sin is the evil that everywhere characterizes the animate and inanimate creation, and that afflicts² man as an inhabitant of this earth and as a member of society. Famine and pestilence, storm and earthquake, disease and war, the misfortunes common to man's more personal life, the death of loved ones, the monotony of ill-rewarded labour, the weakness of our mortal body, the pain of childbirth, - all these conspire to fill man's life from birth to impoverished old age with sorrow. Lastly, there looms the overpowering fact of death, the crown of all miseries, made even more awful by the indifference to men to it, through which "God has indeed provided for the execution of his own decree in the very principles of our nature".³

To Wesley all physical evil is "at once a consequence and a⁴ proof" of moral evil. This suggests that probably here we may most appropriately discuss his treatment of the problem of evil.

We have already foreshadowed the most significant aspect of Wesley's view in indicating that in its origin evil is to be referred to a being other than God. When God had finished the creation it

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1. Works ix, 238-40 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Vide ibid. vi, 246ff. "The General Deliverance", ibid. vi, 295 "The New Creation", ibid. vii, 386ff. "The Cause And Cure Of Earth-quakes", ibid. vii, 400ff. "National Sins And Miseries", ibid. ix, 221ff., 235ff., 320ff., 356ff., 383ff., 439ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 3. Ibid. vi, 221 "On The Fall Of Man".
 4. Ibid. ix, 235 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

was perfect in His sight, for the Bible tells us that it received His approbation. This is an important point, for the "cavils of minute philosophers", of "vain men"¹ and sweet-tongued orators",² spring from the mistake of supposing that the creation as they behold it is the unaltered product of God's immediate handiwork.³ On the basis of this fallacy they either blame God for the existence of evil or else devise ingenious (but erroneous) means to relieve Him of it. Wesley cannot tolerate such devices, in particular Manichaeism or Stoicism.⁴ He is insistent that the "plain, simple, account of the origin of evil"⁵ as found in the Genesis narrative of Adam's sin, be accepted as literally true. This account affirms that "Lucifer, Son of the morning", "the first sinner in the universe", "... by the abuse of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation" and became "the author of sin".⁶ Thus Wesley is personifying the principle of evil objectively in a being other than God. This principle entered into the constitution of man's nature when Adam, able either to obey or disobey God's law, chose to yield to sin. Wesley writes succinctly: "Man, abusing that liberty, produced evil; brought sin and pain into the world".⁷ This is tantamount to saying that moral evil caused physical evil, and indeed this is Wesley's final conclusion. It "... unravels the whole difficulty of that grand question, Unde Malum ?

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1. Works vi,213 "God's Approbation Of His Works".
 2. Ibid. vi,240 "God's Love To Fallen Man". This latter phrase is applied to the Rev. John Taylor in reply to whose treatise on original sin Wesley composed his own work. Vide ibid. ix,291 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 3. Vide ibid. vi,206ff. "God's Approbation Of His Works", ibid. ix,311,372 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Letters iii,338-39 Jan.6, 1756.
 4. Vide Letters i,45, Dec.19,1729, ibid. i,64, Dec.11,1730.
 5. Works vi,215 "On The Fall Of Man".
 6. Ibid. vi,271 "The End Of Christ's Coming". Vide also ibid. vii,337 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", ibid. vii,400 National Sins And Miseries", Notes Matt. 13:27-8.
 7. Ibid. vi,240 "God's Love To Fallen Man". Vide also ibid. vi,215f. "On The Fall Of Man".

1
'How came evil into the world?'

Once he has admitted that physical evil (in particular suffering) springs from moral evil, Wesley must regard ²¹¹ suffering as deserved and as essentially punitive.² The harshness of this position forces him to such lengths as having to acknowledge that all assaults on man's comfort - from the attacks of caterpillars, the "gripes" of children and the 30,000 letter alphabet of the Chinese, to volcanoes and earthquakes - are illustrations of God's wrath. When this argument is carried to its conclusion Wesley must allow that suffering always denotes sin.³ Because all men suffer (pain and death), he must assert that all men are sinful, either actually or imputatively. But all men can only be regarded as sinful by believing that they are derived from Adam. Thus, we find ourselves saying that to conceive physical evil as derivative from moral evil necessitates that we accept the Biblical account of evil. And we end where we began: "Universal misery is at once a proof and a consequence of this universal corruption".⁴

Wesley last proves the reality of sin by appealing to man's personal experience of it within his soul. We recall that among the

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1. Works vi, 271 "The End Of Christ's Coming".
 2. It is noteworthy that in his early thought Wesley conceived suffering (evil) as primarily disciplinary and curative, and the amount inflicted to be in direct proportion to the seriousness of the moral malady. He writes that "The whole world is ... only one great infirmity", and that man can not expect to be free from pain - and consequently from sin - until death. (Works vii, 366 "The Trouble And Rest Of Good Men") He always held that when nobly born, suffering is productive of virtue, love and faith, but in his later thought he is most emphatic in saying that it is essentially punitive, rather than disciplinary or curative. To believe the latter savours too much of an unhealthy mysticism, and of Popery. Vide ibid. vi, 235-37 "God's Love To Fallen Man", ibid. ix, 317f., 350f. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. xiv, 277 "Preface To An Extract From The Life Of Madame Guion", Letters iii, 107-08, Sept. 24, 1753.
 3. Vide Works ix, 318f., 326 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Works ix, 235 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Vide also p. 351 of the same work.

consequences of Adam's fall for posterity is the transmission not only of imputed but of inherent sin. The children of men are made to experience the reality and power of sin in a personal way, and their entire beings - mind, will and affections - are actually rendered corrupt. We also recall Wesley's recognition of the measure of preventing grace that is operative even in the unregenerate, which makes every man morally self-responsible and chargeable for the consequences of his own transgressions. That man sins in spite of the grace that constrains - as well as allows - him not to, brings all the greater condemnation upon him. Therefore, because all men sin it may be said that in a figurative sense every man is the Adam of his own soul. We sin not only because of our predisposition to do so, derived from Adam, but because of our failure properly to exercise through preventing grace the faculties with which God has endowed us. Adam's sin is not alone the cause of our transgressions in as much as we may avoid them if we choose. They are also attributable to the wickedness of our own beings whereby we imitate within the limits of our own autonomy the fall of Adam and commit our own spiritual suicide. "We are therefore to look for the cause of every sin, in, not out of, ourselves. Even the injections of the devil can not hurt before we make them our ¹own".

It is noteworthy that in appealing to the inward personal reality of sin in the human soul, Wesley does not restrict himself to those

1. Notes Jas.1:14. Vide also Works vi, 58 "Original Sin", *ibid.* vii 339ff. "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart", *ibid.* ix, 230ff., 275, 286, 325, 367 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

who are natural men, ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.¹ He asks us to look at those who are at least nominal Christians, who are supposed to have recovered something of the image of God, and then to judge whether the fact of sin can be denied.² Most significant, however, is his contention that even the truly regenerate bear witness to the reality of original sin, as, despite their salvation they still feel its roots remaining in them. "The sincere Christian, day by day, carries the proof of it in his own bosom..."³ We shall discuss this point at length in the chapter on sanctification.⁴

Summarizing, we conclude that Wesley establishes the doctrine of man as originally sinful by accepting as historic truth the Biblical revelation of Adam's fall with its consequences for the human race. To confirm this revelation he appeals to the reality of sin in human experience as observable by reason. He concludes that experience is a proof of the fact that,

"...our nature is deeply corrupted, inclined to evil, and disinclined to all that is spiritually good; so that, without supernatural grace, we can neither will nor do what is pleasing to God. And this easily accounts for the wickedness and misery of mankind in all ages and nations; whereby experience and reason do so strongly confirm this scriptural doctrine of original sin".⁵

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1. Vide Works vii, 89ff. "On The Education Of Children".
 2. Vide Ibid. vi, 264f. "The Mystery Of Iniquity", ibid. vii, 284-85 "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity", ibid. viii, 160ff. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Ibid. ix, 431 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Vide also ibid. ix, 441 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. v, 145ff. "On Sin In Believers", ibid. v, 158ff. "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. vii, 341 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart".
 4. Vide Infra pp. 222 ff.
 5. Works ix, 273 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Wesley does not hesitate to give his own testimony to the power and reality of sin. He frankly writes: "I ... am inclined, and was ever since I can remember, antecedently to any choice of my own, to pride, revenge, idolatry. If you will not call these moral corruptions, call them just what you will; but the fact I am as well assured of, as that I have any memory or understanding". Ibid. ix, 294 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

The Importance of the Doctrine of Original Sin for the Doctrine of Man

We conclude this section upon Wesley's proof of man as originally sinful by pointing out how essential he believed the doctrine of original sin to be ^{to} the entire doctrine of man. It is essential because it records and explains the fact which Wesley believes must be central in any view of man, the fact of sin. Nothing so intelligibly accounts for, and effectively enforces this fact as the doctrine of original sin, founded on scripture, reason and experience. It draws what Wesley believes to be a faithful picture of natural man. We shall presently see that this picture is so dark that he does not scruple to speak of the "universal depravity", ¹ of the "entire depravation" ² of man's nature. Our concern here is to emphasize how important Wesley conceives the doctrine of original sin to be to any accurate doctrine of man.

His sensitiveness on this point is illustrated in the sharpness with which he rejects any view of man that in the least deprecates his natural depravity, and in the sympathy he displays toward any view which accepts the doctrine of original sin. With regard to the former, he writes with almost unbecoming asperity of the Deistic, Pelagian treatise of Dr. John Taylor (1694-1761), The Scripture Doctrine Of Original Sin (published 1735-6) ³, which provoked Wesley's own reply, begun in 1751 and published in 1757. ⁴ Wesley speaks of "Dr. Taylor's poison", ⁵ of his disciples as "sweet-tongued Antichrists"; ⁶ he remarks that " ... no single person since Mahomet has given such a blow to Christianity as Dr. Taylor", ⁷ and says that the controversy

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1. Works vi, 398 "Of The Church".
 2. Ibid. vi, 63 "Original Sin".
 3. Vide Letters iv, 66, editor's note.
 4. Vide Ibid. iii, 180, June 18, 1756, ibid. iv, 67, July 3, 1759, Journal iii, 520, Apr. 10, 1751, Works ix, 465 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 5. Journal iv, 200, Apr. 1, 1757.
 6. Ibid. iii, 374, Aug. 28, 1748.
 7. Letters iv, 48, Dec. 9, 1758.

over original sin " ... is a controversy de re, if ever there was one in this world ..."¹ The Christian revelation cannot tolerate a doctrine of man which portrays him as only "a little lower than the angels",² as this contradicts the very purpose of that revelation, to save man from his congenitally sinful self. For this reason, among others, Deists are opposed "ex professo".³

On the other hand, Wesley's sympathy toward any view which asserts the profound depravity of man is shown in the remark that there is not a hair's breadth of difference between himself, John Calvin, Arminius and George Whitefield, on the doctrine of original sin.⁴ It is also reflected in the alacrity with which he defends the propositions of the Westminster Confession in support of this doctrine.⁵

Positively, Wesley alleges that the doctrine of original sin is the "first grand distinguishing point between Heathenism and Christianity".⁶ It is distinctive, first, because it is affirmed by the Christian revelation; secondly, because it is the only view which does justice to the realities of human nature. We can best let Wesley speak for himself. "But here is the shibboleth: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? ... Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still".⁷

Lastly, we may indicate the importance Wesley attached to the doctrine of original sin by reporting that he believed it to be the

1. Letters iv, 67, July 3, 1759

2. Works vi, 55 "Original Sin". Vide also ibid. vii, 336 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart".

3. Letters iv, 245, May 25, 1764.

4. Vide Works x, 359 "What Is An Arminian?".

5. Vide ibid. ix, 261ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

6. Ibid. vi, 63 "Original Sin".

7. Ibid. vi, 63 "Original Sin".

"most proper" of all others to be inculcated in children.¹ One is to show them that ... they are now ... like the devil ... like the beasts of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect ..."²

IV

The Nature of Sin

In Wesley's mind sin appears to bear four aspects. It is first conceived as having its source in a cosmic principle of evil which to all intents and purposes is metaphysical. This principle appears to be universally operative in human experience because it is inconceivable that all men without exception would sin if there were not some diabolic agency against whose assaults man is unable to defend himself. Thus one may say that the universality of sin³ proves its reality as an operative principle. The existence of this principle is personified in Lucifer, Satan, who rebelled against God to become sovereign of this world, and who, as the ruler of hell, becomes in Wesley's mind the source of the cosmic reality of sin.⁴ Throughout Wesley's writings we find it literally assumed that evil is operative in the person of Satan and his minions.

Secondly, when sin is considered as having been infused into man at the time of Adam's fall and transmitted to the human race,

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1. Vide Works ix, 313 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Ibid. vii, 94 "On The Education Of Children".
 3. Ibid. ix, 288f., 300f., 338-39, 348f., 372, 375 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Vide ibid. vi, 27f. "Wandering Thoughts", ibid. vi, 32ff. "Satan's Devices", ibid. vi, 271f. "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. vi, 370ff. "Of Evil Angels", ibid. vi, 380ff. "Of Hell", ibid. vi, 479f. "On Temptation", ibid. vii, 330f. "On Faith", ibid. viii, 131 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters ii, 90, Mar. 25, 1747, ibid. iii, 300, Dec. 1751, Notes Matt. 13:28, and passim.

it becomes a principle of corruption spreading throughout man's being. This principle is symbolized in Wesley's use of the word "flesh" in the Pauline sense,¹ and is not to be equated with what we speak of as the "body". There can be no such thing as a sinful body for only spirits are capable of sin.²

Wesley also uses the figure of a malignant disease to portray the nature of this principle of sin, and states that every man is suffering from its ravages to such an extent that only Θεραπεία ψυχῆς, (in Plato's phrase) a "cleansing of the soul" by the divine physician can restore its health.³ Sin is organic to man's being. It is not only a functional disorder. And treatment in the way of education, proper home training, the formation of good habits, etc., is always at best only palliative, hardly if ever curative.⁴

When this principle of corruption has wrought its harm in man's nature a certain state of soul results of which Wesley speaks as "dissipation".⁵ In this third sense sin is an inward disposition of man's soul toward "alienation" from God,⁶ "... a desire of disposing of ourselves, of independency on God".⁷ We have seen that the purpose of life is fellowship with its Creator. At its best life consists in communion with God. At its sinful worst man's life consists in alienation from God. God is the centre of all

1. Vide Works v, 88 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit", ibid. v, 155 "On Sin In Believers", ibid. ix, 281, 297-300 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Notes Gal. 5:16-17, 19, 21; Eph. 2:3.
2. Works vi, 418 "On Perfection".
3. Vide ibid. ix, 194 "Preface To The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
4. Vide ibid. ix, 238-39, 295, 301-02, 306, 365 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
5. Probably the best exposition of Wesley's theological conception of sin is found in the sermon entitled "On Dissipation", Works vi, 444ff.
6. Vide ibid. vi, 28 "Wandering Thoughts".
7. Notes Luke 15:12.

created spirits and sin is the "uncentring the soul from God".¹
That is the essence of Adam's sin, a deliberate act of self-alienation from God. His sins of self-will, pride, idolatry, etc., were derivative from this deeper sin. In the same fashion all men violate the claim of fatherly love and seek their happiness out of God, thwarting the purpose of their lives. In this sense all sin is atheism,² an indifference to or a denial of the reality of God and a forsaking of His claim upon life. In view of this fundamental position, any distraction of the faculties of the soul from a unified dedication to God is condemned as sinful. When man's will is asserted in place of God's,³ man commits the sin of self-will. When he uses his body for purposes that dull his sense of God he is guilty of the sin of carnality. When he employs any of his faculties in such a manner as to lessen the authority of God over his soul and ^{to} take unto himself the honour that belongs to his Creator, he is guilty of the sin of pride. From this it is clear that the converse of the sin of spiritual atheism is the sin of idolatry,⁴ whereby the creature is loved more than the Creator. When man is blind to the claim of God upon him he becomes awake to the attractions of the world.⁵ The more particular sins of which St. John speaks - the desire of the flesh, desire of the eye, the pride of life - become natural to him.⁶ Man cannot unguardedly indulge in "friendship with the world"⁷ without committing the sin of

1. Works vi, 447 "On Dissipation"

2. Vide Works vii, 217-18 "On Riches", ibid. vii, 263-64 "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith",

3. Vide ibid. vi, 107f. "On Self-Denial".

4. Vide ibid. vii, 218 "On Riches", ibid. vii, 267f. "The Unity Of The Divine Being".

5. By the "world" Wesley means that area of life that is without God. Vide ibid. vi, 454 "On Friendship With The World", ibid. vi, 437ff. "Spiritual Idolatry".

6. I John 2:16

7. Works vi, 452 "On Friendship With The World"

"spiritual adultery",¹ the most heinous form of "enmity against God".²

From this inward disposition spring all outward sins.³ When considered as an outward act, sin is "... an actual, voluntary transgression of the moral law; of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such at the time that it is transgressed".⁴ Obviously this statement assumes the exercise of man's free will which is inclined to corruption because of his membership in Adam, but endued with power to choose right because of the assistance of preventing grace. We may legitimately stress the importance of the word "voluntary" in this definition. The possibility of sin necessitates individual moral responsibility, as we have seen. The extent that man willingly and consciously allows himself to be a party to sin determines the seriousness of its offence to God. The degree of sinfulness of any one act is determined by the degree of "occurrence of the will".⁵ The will can prevail against temptation⁶ where the emotions and reason yield. It is the strategic agency by which man implements God's strengthening grace to conquer sin. It is the crucial faculty of man's being.

Because of his qualifications of sin as "voluntary", Wesley must allow for another category of involuntary transgressions of the

1. Notes Jas.4:8

2. Vide Works vi,333 "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels", ibid.vi,457 "On Friendship With The World", Notes Matt. 12:39, 16:4.

3. Ibid.ix,274 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

4. Ibid.v,227 "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God". Vide also ibid. vi,417 "On Perfection", Letters i,111,Oct.3,1731, Ibid. iv,155, June 7,1761.

5. Works .v,11 "Salvation By Faith" Vide also ibid.v,93 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".

6. The essence of temptation is its appeal to the principle of evil in man by which the soul is disunited from God and made subservient to the creature rather than to the Creator. Temptation proceeds from the body, from infirmities of the soul, from living by necessity in a disordered world of wicked men, and from the assaults of evil spirits and Satan. Vide Works vi,477ff. "On Temptation".

moral law. This category includes transgressions that are called "sins of infirmity", and "sins of surprise".¹ The former are occasioned by the infirmities of body and mind that necessarily attend man as a human being inhabiting a mortal body, and are beyond the control of his will. The latter are involuntary transgressions in which the will of man similarly plays no part. Wesley acknowledges that it is difficult to determine the nature of the sinfulness of such transgressions. He concludes, however, that "in proportion as a sinful desire, or word, or action, is more or less voluntary, so we may conceive God is more or less displeased, and there is more or less guilt upon the soul".²

It is essential that this conception of what constitutes an act of sin be kept in mind, for it is in terms of a definition of sin as a "voluntary transgression" that Wesley conceives Christian perfection to be salvation from all sin.

V

The Doctrine of Preventing Grace

It is time that we examine at greater length Wesley's Arminian doctrine of preventing grace as it fits into the doctrine of man and into the structure of his theology, for this is a crucial doctrine in several respects.

By preventing grace Wesley means the supernatural activity of God in the soul of every man born into the world despite his depraved nature³ inherited from Adam. Wesley sometimes speaks of preventing grace as the Holy Spirit. He more frequently, however, relates it

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1. Works v,92-4 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".
 2. Vide Works v,93 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".
 3. Vide Letters ii, 71, June 25, 1746.

directly to Christ. It is distinctively Christian grace. By this we mean that the benefits of Christ's meritorious life and death¹ were made efficacious before he came in the flesh, from the beginning² of the world, and that in a mysterious sense the guilt and death transmitted to all men by Adam are in a degree cancelled by the righteousness of Christ.³ Our Lord's righteousness to some extent mitigates the sentence of death passed upon all men, and their bodies become immortal after the resurrection; similarly, their souls are made to receive a capacity for spiritual life as well as a seed or spark thereof.⁴ In other words, the benefits of Christ's atonement have been efficacious before the incarnation and all men are actually (in some degree) and potentially made alive, for "...⁵ every degree of grace is a degree of life". (Wesley believes this to be not only theologically but historically true).⁶ But this is⁷ not to say that every man possesses the Spirit of Christ; rather, that he has been given a degree of preventing grace and a degree of life through Christ's atonement.

The main purpose of preventing grace is to allow and assist man to exercise his (otherwise) depraved faculties, that he may in some measure at least live as an immortal spirit created by God, and that he may avail himself of further grace for salvation. Even "the meanest" of one's natural faculties cannot be exerted without the

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1. Vide Letters iii, 372, Oct. 15, 1756, Works vi, 253 "The Mystery Of Iniquity".
 2. Vide Notes I Cor. 15:47.
 3. Vide Letters vi, 239-40, Nov. 21, 1776.
 4. Vide Works viii, 277-78 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. ix, 268 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 5. Letters vi, 239, Nov. 21, 1776.
 6. Vide Works vi, 57-9 "Original Sin".
 7. Vide Letters iii, 361, Jan. 6, 1756.

assistance of God.¹

The most important function of preventing grace is to confer on man's will the property of freedom to choose the good. By nature the will is so corrupted in Adam that it is "free only to evil".² "We are inclined to evil, antecedently to our own choice".³ By the influence of preventing grace, however, is "supernaturally restored".⁴ to every man. Without this gift man would indeed be by nature determined toward evil. But God's love has not seen fit so to condemn man.

Wesley refers specifically to this supernatural restoration of freedom fairly frequently in his writings.⁵ Almost always one observes that he affirms freedom primarily on the ground of the Christian revelation, i.e. that freedom is a gift of preventing grace made available by Jesus Christ. Wesley's doctrine of human freedom is thus not only religious as distinguished from being merely philosophical. It is definitely Christian as distinguished from being simply religious. Furthermore, his doctrine of freedom is essentially soteriological as distinguished from being merely theological, in that it appears to be mainly designed in order to allow man to cooperate with subsequent communications of grace for salvation. One can detect in most of Wesley's references to preventing grace

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1. Vide Letters ii, 71, June 25, 1746.
 2. Works x, 392 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 3. Ibid. ix, 275 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Ibid. x, 230 "Predestination Calmly Considered".
 5. In addition to the above references, vide also ibid. vii, 228-29 "What Is Man?", ibid. viii, 52-3 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. viii, 285 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. ix, 273, 275, 286, 294, 308, 326f. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. x, 231-32 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 350 "Some Remarks On A Defence Of Aspasio Vindicated", ibid. x, 444 "Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago Double Distilled".

(especially in an important one that reveals his sympathy with the Xth Article of the Church of England,) ¹ a desire to conceive of man as not only able but constrained by God's love to accept Christian salvation. Preventing grace fixes upon him a claim, a responsibility for responding to further overtures of divine love.

Its next function is to enlighten and quicken the moral sensibilities of man. Its operations are erroneously construed by some thinkers as merely "natural conscience", i.e. that in addition to the five physical senses with which man is endowed by nature, he possesses a "moral sense" also "natural" to him. ² But this is indeed only a kind of atheism for it "leaves God" out of the "scheme of virtue". On the contrary, the capacity for knowing right and wrong, as well as the desire to perform right and shun wrong, is properly "... a branch of that supernatural gift of God which we usually style, preventing grace". ³ It is intimated in the New Testament in St. John's words concerning that true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ⁴ "Every one has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray ...", ⁵ "... all Mahometans, all Pagans, yea, the vilest of savages". ⁶

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1. Vide Works viii, 52-3 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Vide *ibid.* vii, 188-89 "On Conscience"
 3. *Ibid.* vii, 189 "On Conscience"
 4. John 1:9 Vide Notes
 5. Works vi, 512 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation"
 6. *Ibid.* vii, 345 "The Heavenly Treasure In Earthen Vessels". In addition to the references cited above, vide also *ibid.* v. 136f. "The Witness Of The Spirit", *ibid.* v. 311-12 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-y", *ibid.* v. 353 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vii", *ibid.* v. 436 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law", *ibid.* vi, 44 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", *ibid.* vii, 187 "On Conscience", *ibid.* vii, 258 "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith", *ibid.* viii, 106 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", *ibid.* ix, 268 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", *ibid.* x, 232 "Predestination Calmly Considered", Notes Rom. 2:14, Letters ii, 117-18, Feb. 10, 1748.

Preventing grace first delineates the general lines of good and evil; it secondly provides man with an inward monitor in the form of conscience which pronounces approbation and disapprobation upon his conduct. Wesley defines conscience as follows:

"First, it is a witness, - testifying what we have done, in thought, word, or action. Secondly. It is a judge, - passing sentence on what we have done, that it is good or evil. And, Thirdly, it in some sort, executes the sentence, by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness in him that does evil".¹

The third function of preventing grace Wesley appears to identify with the operations of convincing grace. But this will be more suitably treated in a later chapter,² and in our consideration of man as an object of redemption to which we now turn.

VI

Man as an Object of Redemption

Wesley's formal doctrines are frequently best understood when they are translated in terms of religious experience. He himself often passes unconsciously from doctrine into experience, doubtless because he seems to have thought in terms of experience rather than in terms of doctrinal categories. This lends a vigour - if sometimes a confusion - to his thought that gives one the feeling that he is speaking from life itself, from a first-hand knowledge of what transpires in the human soul when saving grace claims it.

This observation particularly prevails when we contemplate man as an object of redemption. When Wesley's doctrines of the endowments of man, of original sin and preventing grace conjoin, in

1. Works vii, 188 "On Conscience".
2. Vide infra pp. 107ff., 120ff.

what state is man as divine grace confronts him with the promise of salvation?

In view of the central importance Wesley attaches to the doctrine of original sin in his wider doctrine of man, it is first necessary that man be considered a creature of sin and mortality. Because of his membership in Adam he is "... 'conceived in sin', and 'shapen in wickedness'; ... there is in every man 'a carnal mind' ... which so infects the whole soul, that 'there dwelleth in' him ... in his natural state, 'no good thing'; but 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil', only evil, and that 'continually'".¹ Moreover, because man has been given sufficient grace to avoid sin if he so will, his sin redounds all the more to his condemnation. "For all have sinned" -- In Adam, and in their own persons ..."² Wesley does not hesitate to speak of this state of sin as "universal depravity",³ "entire depravation",⁴ "entire corruption",⁵ "altogether ... depraved".⁶ Because man is filled with sin he is godless. Because he is entirely depraved he is entirely godless. Just as doctrine defines sin as atheism,⁷ alienation from God, so man "... is, by nature, a mere Atheist". To put it technically, if mildly,⁸ "we are unhinged from our proper centre". We have by nature no

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1. Works vi,63 "Original Sin"
 2. Notes Rom.3:23. Italics mine.
 3. Works vi,398 "Of The Church".
 4. Ibid. vi,63 "Original Sin", Vide also Notes Rom.6:6.
 5. Ibid. vi,68 "The New Birth".
 6. Ibid. vi,107 "Self-Denial".
 7. Ibid. vii,89 "On The Education Of Children". Vide also ibid. vi,446 "On Dissipation", ibid. vii,351 "On Living Without God", Letters i,328, July 31, 1739, Notes Eph.2:12.
 8. Works vi,502 "The Important Question".

knowledge, no fear, no love of God.¹

In as much as spiritual life is life with God, and natural man is without God, he is " ... spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God ..."² This state of death Wesley insists on so strongly as to make this comment: " ... the sin of Adam, without the sins which we afterwards committed, brought us death ..."³ This statement is tantamount to saying that we are inevitably determined by Adam's sin to death regardless of our own moral responsibilities. But we must place against this another contradictory statement that Wesley makes with reference to punishments, which, we recall, take the form of (pain and) death. "That all men are liable to these for Adam's sin alone, I do not assert; but they are so, for their own inward and outward sins, which, through their own fault, spring from the infection of their nature".⁴ The latter statement clearly implies the exercise of free will through the assistance of preventing grace, and indeed Wesley refers to "help from God" in the paragraph preceding that quoted. This contradiction, however, is significant. It points out to us that when we contemplate the state of depravity of man as an object of redemption, Wesley comes again within a "hair's breadth" of Calvinism.

The picture of man in his state of depravity is made even darker when beheld from a more definitely philosophical, non-moral point of view. Despite the divine endowments Wesley believes man to possess as an immortal spirit, man is nothing when compared to God. God infinitely transcends man;

1. Vide Works vi, 58-9 "Original Sin".

2. Ibid. vi, 68 "The New Birth".

3. Notes Rom. 5:14.

4. Works ix, 286 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

there is a radical discontinuity between man and God. "With regard to the Most High, man and all^{the} concerns of men are nothing, less than nothing, before Him"¹. Even the finest flowers that human culture can grow, as Wesley supposes, the Chancellor, Fellows and Tutors of Oxford, are asked whether they discharge their duties "... consistent with the character of 'man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm'"². The most significant feature of this more philosophical conception of man, however, is Wesley's feeling for the transitoriness of life as measured against the eternity of God. This feeling can perhaps best be conveyed in the words in which Wesley writes of his own being: "I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: Just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity!"³ Elsewhere he speaks of life as an "isthmus" between "two boundless oceans",⁴ as "unstable as a cloud; fluctuating as a bubble", fleeting as a "shadow".⁵

It thus becomes clear that the depravity of man together with the transitory finitude that characterizes him as a creature, conspire to make his plight seemingly hopeless. It is hard to see what point of contact with God can be allowed to him by which God can redeem him through saving grace. The picture Wesley draws of natural man is indeed a black one, and it is not difficult to

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1. Works vi, 323 "On Divine Providence".
 2. Ibid. v, 49 "Scriptural Christianity". Vide also ibid. vi, 317 "On Divine Providence".
 3. Ibid. v, 3 "Preface To Sermons".
 4. Letters ii, 98, July 10, 1747.
 5. Works vii, 309 "On Worldly Folly", Vide also ibid. vi, 190ff. "On Eternity", ibid. vii, 169-71 "What Is Man"?

understand his admission that he thinks just as Calvin with regard¹ to the salient fact of natural man, - sin.

But the truth of the matter is that the picture Wesley has drawn is not a complete one. One suspects it of being a picture he would have liked to consider complete. But "... there is no man that is in a state of mere nature ... No man living is entirely² destitute of what is ... properly termed, preventing grace". One can indeed say that by nature man is totally depraved; but one must immediately add that no man is completely natural. He is at the same time natural and supernatural. The picture of man as totally depraved is at best an approximation to reality. For the "... state of nature is itself a state of grace, preliminary³ grace which, is ... the effect and gift of redemption".

It is preventing grace that supplies what man by nature lacks by which his salvation may be undertaken, first, enlightenment as to what holiness is; secondly, a persuasion, an inclination toward holiness; and thirdly, power for the will to co-operate with the gracious love of God which seeks to assist man to holiness. When preventing grace is considered from this point of view it passes into convincing grace. Indeed, on occasion Wesley writes that preventing grace enables the sinner, weary and heavy laden,⁴ to cast all his sins upon Him who is the atonement for all sin. It is difficult to say precisely where preventing grace merges into convincing grace; probably at the point where man begins to believe⁵ in such a way that he is ready to be justified. When it operates

1. Vide Works x, 359 "What Is An Arminian?".

2. Ibid. vi, 512 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

3. W. B. Pope, A Compendium Of Christian Theology p. 471. Vide also F. Platt, Immanence And Christian Thought pp. 354-61.

4. Vide Works viii, 373 "The Principles Of A Methodist", ibid. xiv, 212 "Preface To An Extract Of The Life And Death Of Mr. Thomas Haliburton".

5. Vide Ibid. viii, 293 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

in sinful men in order to enlighten them concerning holiness, it first gives them through conscience knowledge of the perfect moral law, enforced with the strongest sanctions, rewards and penalties, a "... general knowledge of good and evil. To this" it "adds many secret reproofs, if they act contrary to this light; many inward convictions, which there is not a man on earth who has not often felt".¹ When preventing grace functions in order to incline men toward God, it establishes in them " a particular frame and temper of soul, a sobriety of mind",² certain "desires after God"³ which allow them to attend properly to further overtures of grace, and which constrains them to flee from the wrath to come.⁴

The crucial activity of preventing grace is the conferring of power upon man's naturally depraved will to work together with further ministrations of grace unto salvation. We have already pointed out several illuminating instances where this particular aspect of preventing grace saves Wesley from thorough-going determinism. We concluded from these as well as from the general tenor of the doctrine of original sin, that of himself man can not co-operate with justifying grace, and if left without supernatural assistance would be sentenced to unredeemable damnation. God's grace in its prevenient operation becomes an "absolute necessity".⁵ Hence, even in the very first stage of salvation man is nothing, God is everything. For only by grace, as it were, can man co-operate

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1. Vide Works x, 232 "Predestination Calmly Considered". Vide also ibid. v, 198 "The Means Of Grace".
 2. Ibid. vii, 489 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".
 3. Ibid. vi, 44 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation" Vide also ibid. v, 233 "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God", ibid. vi, 147 "The Good Steward".
 4. Vide ibid. v, 109 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption".
 5. Letters v, 231, Mar. 22, 1771.

with grace. Indeed, "the very power to 'work together with Him'"¹ is "from God". "Therefore", since it is in our power to work together with God for our salvation, "it is our duty; and if we fall short herein, it is our own fault".²

Thus, when we contemplate man as an object of redemption we must concede that in the final issue, when considered both naturally and supernaturally man, cannot be said to be "totally depraved". By the gift of preventing grace he is not depraved to such an extent but that he himself must assume all blame if he is not saved, nor are his transgressions derived from the principle of original sin to such a degree that he can not avoid them through his supernaturally empowered will. If man but avail himself of the ever-present help of God he may overcome the corruption of his will and nature, and become capable of his moral duty. In this manner Wesley preserves the reality of man's sinful nature as inherited from Adam, and provides at the same time for his moral and volitional autonomy. Man is personally responsible for sin and its consequences in so far as he refrains from yielding further to the grace God has made available.

It remains to be observed that salvation is already begun in the activity of preventing grace.³ All the stirrings of conscience and all choosing of right in preference to wrong imply that God is concerning Himself with the salvation of the human soul. It is true that these comprise but a faint twilight when compared to the fulness of the light that shines in one who believes on him who is the light of the world. Yet they teach us of the quality of God's love, that it will welcome even him who is indeed in a

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1. Works x, 230 "Predestination Calmly Considered".
 2. Ibid. ix, 308 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Vide also pp.312, 326f. of the same work.
 3. Vide Works vi,44 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vi,509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

"far land".

As a corollary of sin, the principle of judgment is vital to Wesley's theology, particularly to the doctrine of man as an object of redemption. It is significant that in reporting the formation of the Methodist Societies he writes that "the only condition" was having "a real desire to flee from the wrath to come".¹ This feeling for divine judgment similarly manifests itself elsewhere, in particular in the doctrine of God's justice. This will be discussed extensively² in the next chapter. Here we are concerned to point out, simply, that because God is just He is a judge. Sin so offends His holiness that He cannot but pronounce condemnation both on sin and on sinners. Men are prone to forget this. "Presumption is one grand snare of the devil, in which many of the children of men are taken. They so presume on the mercy of God as utterly to forget his justice ... they flatter themselves, that in the end God will be better than his word. They imagine they may live and die in their sins, and nevertheless³ 'escape the damnation of hell'". It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the framework of Wesley's ideas of judgment. It will suffice to say that they suffer from incredibility because of his pre-critical interpretation of the Bible. On the other hand, his⁴ conceptions of hell,⁵ heaven,⁶ and the final judgment, correspond/certain^{to}

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1. Vide Works vii, 276-77 "The Ministerial Office".
 2. Vide infra pp.54ff.
 3. Works vi, 514 "A Call To Backsliders".
 4. Vide ibid.v, 83 "The Way To The Kingdom", ibid.v, 178ff. "The Great Assize", ibid.vi, 194ff. "On Eternity", ibid.vi, 381ff. "Of Hell", ibid.vi, 497f. "The Important Question", ibid.vii, 234-35 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid.vii, 327ff. "On Faith", Letters iii, 369-70, Jan.6, 1756, Notes Matt.5:22; 25:46; Mark 9:44; Luke 12:5; Rom.8:19.
 5. Vide Works vi, 486-97 "The Important Question", ibid.vii, 234-35 "ON The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid.vii, 320ff. "Human Life A Dream", ibid.vii, 327ff. "On Faith", ibid.vi, 295-96 "The New Creation", ibid.xi, 435 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters vi, 213-14, Apr.17, 1776, Notes Mark 12:27.
 6. Vide Works v, 172ff. "The Great Assize", ibid.v, 426 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii", ibid.vi, 144ff. "The Good Steward", ibid.vi, 249ff. "The General Deliverance", ibid.vi, 290ff. "The New Creation", ibid.vii, 127f. "The Reward Of The Righteous", ibid.vii, 234 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid.x, 464, 466-67 "Thoughts Upon Necessity", Letters ii, 125, Feb.19, 1748, Journal i, 139, Note on diary for Jan.19, 1736.

profound truths of the Christian revelation which unite in affirming that sin deserves and receives punishment as righteousness deserves and receives reward. The significance Wesley attached to the importance of judgment, with its concomitant of hell, may be gathered¹ from his summary remark: "No hell, no heaven, no revelation!"

The principle of judgment is used with great effect when applied to man as an object of redemption. The condemnation incurred by his depravity, through both his membership in Adam and the sinful abuse of his free will, subjects him to the utmost consequences of God's outraged justice. Inherent and imputed sin both render him fit for damnation. Furthermore, judgment is both present and future. Man experiences in this life the curse God pronounces upon his sin, and terror before the threat of judgment to come. "Knowest thou not that every sinner ... 'is under the sentence of hell-fire;' doomed already, just dragging to execution ... Dost thou see, dost thou feel this?"² This condition is made even more awful by a realization of the transitoriness of human life as measured against the eternity of torment that awaits the unredeemed. When Wesley joins these together in an effort to awaken natural man out of the sleep of death, he writes: "Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf! What are thou? A sinner born to die; a leaf driven before the wind; a vapour ready to vanish away; just appearing, and then scattered into the air, to be no more seen!"³

Yet, by the grace of God the sinner can live. By yielding to the constraint of divine love working within him he may repent of his sin, believe and live. The responsibility is laid upon him. His

1. Letters iii, 370, Jan. 6, 1756.

2. Works v, 83 "The Way To The Kingdom".

3. Ibid. v, 396 "Upon The Lord's Sermon On The Mount-x."

destiny is in his own hands. "We may live!"¹ This realization, together with the consciousness of his wretched sin, of the transitoriness of his life, and his terror before the divine judgment to come, create in his soul a profound tension. He is torn between the reality of sin and the promise of grace. The soul of natural man may thus be said to be a spirit poised between two worlds. On the one hand are sin and death; on the other, righteousness and life eternal. Judgment, as the consequence of sin, condemns him to the former. Grace, as the mercy of God, promises him the latter. The plight of natural man as an object of redemption is thus one of crisis. For man is an immortal spirit, we recall, come from God and returning to Him to receive an inevitable and final judgment. In the inscrutable wisdom and mercy of God, man has been so created and endowed as to be able through Christ to enter into holiness and life. In utter urgency the atonement beseeches him with its loving claim. If he choose to believe, the life and blessedness of salvation are his. If he choose to turn aside from the outstretched arms of God, his soul shall suffer eternally in its sin.

Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Midst two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell!²

VII

The Significance of Wesley's Doctrine of Man for his Soteriology.

We conclude this chapter on Wesley's doctrine of man with a

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1. Works ix, 275 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Ibid. vi, 190 "On Eternity".

brief discussion of its significance for the succeeding doctrines of his theology.

It will be noted first of all that the doctrine of man is finely poised, that Wesley is holding various beliefs in balance with one another. One feels, however, that in its sweep it is formulated with the basic purpose of discovering and denouncing sin. Its accent on the fact of sin is violent. The evidence amassed on the basis of scripture, reason and experience, to declare that man is congenitally a creature of sin, falls like a heavy weight. Yet it is delicately restrained from irrevocably sinking man in unredeemable damnation by the doctrine of preventing grace.

What does this balance mean? It means that Wesley is asserting the truth that God is holy and just, and that man is sinful and condemned. He is giving to God and man, as it were, their proper places in salvation, at the same time that he is allowing some point of connection between them by which salvation may be undertaken. When considered as a whole, Wesley's doctrine of man implies that God is everything, man is nothing. Even when salvation is begun in the operation of preventing grace, all power and glory are to be ascribed to God.¹ Yet a responsibility rests on man for his own salvation. He has only himself to blame if he is not saved. This relation between God and man is instructive for Wesley's conception of grace as it is discussed in our next chapter and as it manifests itself throughout his entire theology. It suggests to us a central conviction of Wesley's, namely, that in the work of salvation, although man is not passive and is personally responsible, all is wrought by God alone. Man is utterly impotent and depraved. In this sense we may say that Wesley is Calvinist in his conception - though not in his doctrine - of man as an object of redemption. Yet,

1. Vide Works x, 230ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered".

even in the state of utter depravity man is not without divine grace. The supernatural has chosen to redeem the natural. Even with the sentence of death resting upon him, man is the object of God's love, for grace is but a synonym for love. When we contemplate Wesley's entire doctrine of man, therefore, we must say that in His dealings with man God's love accompanies, and in a sense is controlling over, His justice. In obedience to this conviction Wesley asserts the doctrine of preventing grace and departs from formal Calvinism.

The significance, therefore, of the balance that characterizes the doctrine of man indicates that Wesley is seeking to preserve the tension between divine justice and divine love. This manifests itself in a different fashion when we examine the relation of the doctrine of man to other doctrines of his theology as well as to that of grace. The sweep of Wesley's emphasis on human depravity at first sight makes one feel that he is almost guilty of excessive realism in his view of the sinful nature of man, and of undue harshness in his insistence on the correlative necessity of final retribution. But this realistic acknowledgment of the fact of sin is fundamental for a true understanding of his theology. It is indicative of a profound principle which operates throughout all his thought upon salvation, a principle we can best speak of as moral realism. By this we mean a disposition to acknowledge evil and goodness, right and wrong, as realities in light of the Christian revelation of the holiness and justice of God. But there is also simultaneously operative another principle which we can best speak of as perfectionism. By this we mean a disposition to believe that divine grace, in light of the Christian revelation of God's love, promises and is able to achieve in man such holiness as constitutes him fit to dwell in perfect communion with a holy God in this life.

We wish to denote by the use of this term Wesley's utter faith in the promise and power of divine grace to make men perfect in holy love. These two principles acting in conjunction with one another establish a tension that underlies Wesley's entire theology.

When we turn again to the doctrine of man we find the principle of moral realism at work. Translated into doctrine it becomes a vigorous emphasis upon the reality of original sin. This emphasis is one pole of a basic tension that underlies Wesley's soteriology. The other pole is the state of perfection achieved through grace, that is the privilege of every Christian believer. There is indeed a certain violence in each of these conceptions. They impress one as having a certain excessiveness. But only by their very violence, it may be maintained, is the tension successfully established by which holiness is increasingly wrought in man's soul. Therefore, it is unfaithful to Wesley's thought to deprecate his emphasis on the reality of (original) sin. One cannot do so without impairing the tension he is seeking to establish, and without vitiating at the same time a doctrine of grace which proclaims the promise and the power of God's love to make even the most profligate sinner perfect, a promise first signified by preventing grace. In other words, one must acknowledge fully the extent of Wesley's emphasis on sin in order to appreciate most fully his faith in the power of grace, and in order to understand how he conceives God's justice to be reconciled by His love in the salvation of man's soul.

The tension between the principles of moral realism and perfectionism, we have said, is translated into doctrine. We have cited the doctrine of sinful man as an illustration of the manner in which moral realism operates to establish one pole of this tension. But this is more than a set of abstract categories with which we

are dealing. They have their counterpart in experience. For Wesley deliberately sought to establish in the soul of the convert precisely the same tension that takes form in his mind in a conflict between a realistic acknowledgment of the fact of sin and a credulous faith in the promise and power of redeeming grace; which in turn enters into his formal theology in the doctrines of sinful man and Christian perfection in particular, and into his entire theology in general. We shall subsequently study the establishment of this tension in the soul of man in the doctrines of grace, repentance and faith, justification, sanctification and Christian perfection.

When we analyze the doctrine of man we find Wesley striving to make the sinner devastatingly aware of his sin. For this reason he writes that the doctrine of original sin is necessary to soteriology because it explains man to himself. It teaches him that he is dead in sin and a child of wrath, a realistic recognition of which is "absolutely", "indispensably"¹ necessary to the entire experience of salvation. Salvation begins in man's "... knowing himself to be what he really is ..."² "This is a fundamental truth; none will come to Christ as a Redeemer until he is thoroughly convinced he wants a Redeemer. No one will ever come to Him as a Saviour, till he knows and feels himself a lost sinner. None will come to the 'Physician' but 'they that are sick', and are thoroughly sensible of it ..."³ When Wesley's moral realism is carried over into his practical preaching in an endeavour to establish a recognition of sin as one pole of the tension that generates holiness, he pronounces upon the sinner in the name of a moral God the sentence of condemnation for his sin. He speaks of it as the begetting of a conviction

1. Works ix, 312 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

2. Ibid. viii, 12 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion"

3. Ibid. ix, 306 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

of sin unto repentance.¹ We shall deal with this presently in our treatment of repentance. We shall also see how Wesley placed against this in the name of a loving God the claiming promise of saving grace, laid hold on by faith. Our concern here is to make clear how the implications of the principle of moral realism in Wesley's doctrine of man find their issue in experience. Only by an accurate recognition of the reality of sin, both in theology and in religious experience, can the heart of man be made contrite and humble, a fit and mean altar upon which the fires of God can burn.

Thus it is that the human soul is indeed in a state of crisis, of tension, able to yield to the satanic forces that draw it to eternal damnation, or to respond through faith to divine grace through which it may be brought into perfect communion with its Creator. Such a conception of man explains to us why Wesley could look upon the entire world of men as his parish, and the sense of passion that characterized his ministry. It is to be understood that the sine qua non of the theology which made such a ministry possible, is a doctrine of man which acknowledges the palpable reality of the sin with which it must deal at the same time that it trusts in the might of divine grace, and which witnesses thereby its fidelity to one whose ministry of redemptive love was begun with the cry, "Repent Ye"!

1. Vide Works v, 81ff. "The Way To The Kingdom", and infra pp. 107ff., 120ff.

Chapter **II**

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

I

Introduction

It is difficult to write of the place that grace holds in Wesley's formal theology. It so underlies all his thought that we might better reserve our chapter until the end of this thesis. For we could then stand back and observe all that God had done in the salvation of man, and then best understand the nature of divine grace as Wesley conceived it to work in the souls of men. As spectators discussing a play they had just seen, we would acknowledge that God's gracious love was the central motif in the drama of man's¹ salvation. But this is not possible for us. Our task demands that before describing further the redemption of man we first comprehend the character of the love that makes salvation possible. Having understood Wesley's view of the nature of sinful man, we now inquire into his conception of divine grace as it confronts man with the promise of life and righteousness.

Our study of the doctrine of grace will be facilitated if we first approach it with the question, What constitutes saving grace? Secondly, What character does it possess? The first question can be answered simply, - the love of God. But just as God is Triune in nature, so is salvation by grace the work of the whole² Trinity. Therefore we first examine from a soteriological point of view Wesley's doctrine of the members of the Trinity, to inquire how they constitute means of grace for the salvation of man.

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1. It has been pointed out by W.B.Brash that the texts on which Wesley most often preached as recorded in the Journal, were those which reveal his "love of the doctrines of grace". See the article on Wesley in H.E.R.E. xii, 727.
 2. Vide Notes Heb.9:14

II

The Doctrine of the Trinity

It is first to be understood that Wesley's doctrine of the Trinity is not speculative; rather, that it is practical and experiential. It matters to him mainly in so far as it has a definite "... influence on our hearts or lives ..."¹ As a representation of the Three-One God, however, of Whom one may have an "experimental knowledge", he writes that it "... is interwoven with all true Christian faith; with all vital religion".² It is "fundamental" to Christian salvation in that it provides for the activity of God in His respective manifestations; as the Spirit which immanently conveys forgiveness and sanctification; as the Son whose merits have made grace available;³ and as the Father Who pardons and cleanses.

Wesley insists upon no particular formal explication of the manner in which three Persons compose the Trinity. He simply states that God is one, essentially, though three persons.⁴ Each member of the Trinity is very God of very God. "They are one in essence, in knowledge, in will, and in their testimony".⁵ Wesley insists⁶ only upon^{the} words of St. John: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one".⁷ Hence it is necessary to believe no mystery, in as much as man is asked to believe only in the fact that three bear record in heaven and that they are one. Mystery enters in when one undertakes to explain

1. Letters vi, 213, Apr. 17, 1776.

2. Works vi, 205 "On The Trinity".

3. Vide ibid. vi, 205 "On The Trinity".

4. Vide ibid. v, 335 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid. vi, 204-05 "On The Trinity", Notes Mark 12:29.

5. Notes I John 5:8.

6. Vide Works vi, 201 "On The Trinity".

7. I John 5:7.

the manner in which the three comprise one. Wesley does not try to comprehend nor is he concerned about the manner of the composition or operation of the Trinity.¹ It is sufficient that God has revealed that He, as a Triune God, is existent as three persons. This is a fact of revelation. "But would it not be absurd in me to deny the fact, because I do not understand the manner? That is, to reject what God has revealed, because I do not comprehend what he has^{not}/₂ revealed".

It remains, therefore, that in his doctrine of the Trinity Wesley is little concerned with speculation concerning the manner in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit conjoin as one. He is, however, vitally concerned that one acknowledge the fact that the three persons are very God of very God. Socinianism and Arianism are intolerable.³ Most important, he insists upon the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation of the Christian knowledge of God.

III

The Doctrine of God

We consider Wesley's doctrine of God and of the divine attributes under the following classifications:⁴ i. The attributes that pertain to God in His essentially: ii. The attributes that pertain to Him as God of the creation: iii. The attributes that pertain to Him as He concerns Himself with the redemption of mankind.

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1. It is noteworthy that Wesley does not disallow that it is possible for the perfected to comprehend "how" three bear record in heaven. Vide Works vi, 2 "Christian Perfection", and infra p. 296.
 2. Works vi, 204 "On The Trinity". Wesley apparently found this idea in the writings of Dr. Peter Browne, Bishop of Cork in 1710-1735. Vide Letters v, 270, Aug. 3, 1771.
 3. Vide Works vi, 201, 205 "On The Trinity".
 4. Vide Notes Rom. 9:21.

In ¹His essence, God is one ²Spirit, and the centre of all
created ³spirits. He is immaterial, purely and totally spiritual,
invisible. God is infinite. He exceeds the entire finite creation as
the All in All exceeds a point or cipher. ⁴But in as much as there
is no proportion between the finite and the infinite, man cannot
conceive of God's ⁵infinity. This quality is most suitably pre-
dicated of other attributes of God. Wesley thus speaks of God's
infinite wisdom and power, rather than of God's ⁶infinity. God's
being exists through ⁷"boundless duration". He is beyond time. ⁸This
constitutes God's ⁹eternity. His being, as it had no beginning, can
have no end. ¹⁰God is the eternal ¹¹"I AM THAT I AM". Unchangeable-
ness, faithfulness, may also be predicated of God's attributes in
the same manner as infinity. Wesley accordingly speaks of God as
immutably holy, good and just. ¹²Finally, God is perfect. He is
"... full of all spiritual perfections, power, wisdom, love, holi-
ness". ¹³"These perfections we usually term, the attributes of God". ^{14.}

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1. Vide Works vii, 264 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 2. Vide ibid. v, 186 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vii, 242 "On The Omnipresence Of God", ibid. vii, 266 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", Notes John 4:24.
 3. Vide Works v, 427 "Upon The Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii".
 4. Vide ibid. vii, 169 "What Is Man?".
 5. Vide ibid. viii, 197 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 6. Vide ibid. vi, 317 "On Divine Providence".
 7. Ibid. vi, 189 "On Eternity".
 8. Time is defined as a "**fragment** of eternity", "...**that** portion of duration which commenced when the world began, which will continue as long as this world endures, and then expire forever". Ibid. vi, 190 "On Eternity".
 9. Vide ibid. vi, 339 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge", ibid. vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", Notes II Pet. 3:8.
 10. Vide Works vi, 189 "On Eternity".
 11. Ibid. v, 335 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi".
 12. Vide ibid. x, 237-38 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 289-90 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 13. Notes John 4:24.
 14. Works vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".



Perfection, therefore, is also to be applied to the attributes of God rather than to be conceived as an attribute itself.

ii

As connected with the creation, God is ¹ omnipotent. Whenever He wills, to do is present with Him. His will is sovereignly free, ² this quality being clearest seen in His activity as Creator of the universe. His will is limited only in that it is limited by His nature. He cannot contradict Himself. ³ Thus Wesley speaks of God as being "obliged" by His love. ⁴ Also, His will is opposed only in its moral ⁵ dispensations, not in its activity in the natural world. At the same time that He is personally omnipotent He is the source of all power to the creation, the first cause. ⁶ God is also omnipresent. For, clearly He acts everywhere. One has only to contemplate the creation as governed and sustained to acknowledge that God is everywhere ⁷ active. Therefore, since God acts everywhere, He is everywhere. For no being can work where it is not. ⁸ Thus He "...pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe". ⁹ Finally, God is omniscient. This is a necessary.

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1. Vide Works vii, 242 "On The Omnipresence Of God", ibid.vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 2. Vide ibid.v, 333 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid.v, 40-41 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law", ibid.vi, 315 "On The Education Of Children", ibid.x, 361f. "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty".
 3. Vide ibid. vi, 317f "On Divine Providence".
 4. Vide Letters iii, 161, Feb. 5, 1756.
 5. Vide Works vi, 326 "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels".
 6. Vide ibid. v, 335 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", Notes Acts 17:28.
 7. Vide ibid.v, 335 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid.vi, 315f. "On Divine Providence", ibid.vii, 91 "On The Education Of Children".
 8. Vide ibid.vii, 240 "On The Omnipresence Of God".
 9. Ibid.v, 283 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount", Vide also ibid.vi, 338 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge", ibid.vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".

corollary of His omnipresence. For, "if he is present in every part of the universe, he cannot but know whatever is, or is done there ..."¹ Also, He knows from all eternity all that was and is, and shall be, through "one eternal now".² All lies "... naked and open to the eyes of the Creator and Preserver of the universe".³ A synonym for God's knowledge is wisdom, by which is meant His appointment of the ends of all things as well as the means He has prepared conducive thereto.⁴ His wisdom is eminently displayed in the creation and preservation of the whole universe, but pre-eminently in the redemption of man.⁵

The omniscience of God involves a problem that Wesley freely admits he is unable to solve,⁶ the relation of the foreknowledge of God to the freedom of the human will by which man chooses to believe and be saved. We shall presently consider the relation of man's will to God's purpose of salvation at greater length. It will suffice to remark here that Wesley believes there can properly be neither "fore" nor "after" knowledge with God.⁷ St. Paul's use of the former term in Rom. 8:29-30 is an instance of God's deigning to speak to us after the manner of men. It is not to be taken literally.⁸ Nevertheless, although God indeed foreknows future contingencies, His socalled "fore-knowledge" does not cause them to happen.⁹ Events do not

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1. Vide Works vii, 265 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 2. Ibid. vi, 230 "On Predestination".
 3. Ibid. vi, 316 "On Divine Providence".
 4. Vide ibid. vi, 325 "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels", ibid. vii, 266 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 5. Vide ibid. vi, 317 "On Divine Providence", ibid. vi, 326ff. "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels", Notes Rom. 8:28.
 6. Vide Letters iii, 105, Sept. 24, 1753, ibid. v, 199, Sept. 14, 1770, Notes Acts 15:18.
 7. Vide Notes I Pet. 1:2, Works vi, 226-230 "On Predestination".
 8. Vide Works vi, 230 "On Predestination".
 9. Vide Notes John 6:64; Acts 15:18.

happen because God "... knows them. No; he knows them because they¹ are". Wesley himself exegetes the difficult verses in Romans with the intention of showing that salvation is conditional on the response of the human will, although God knows from the beginning those² who shall choose to believe and be saved. The only sense in which God arbitrarily orders salvation consists in the decree, "'He that believeth shall be saved'³"; "'he that believeth not shall be damned'³".

iii

The attributes that most deserve our attention as we study Wesley's doctrine of grace are those which have to do with the redemption of mankind. These are, God's holiness and love.

A.

God's Holiness

Wesley interprets "holy" as meaning "separated". When God is termed holy it denotes that moral excellence which characterizes Him alone as separate from all things. Man and his concerns sink into nothing before Him. God "... is, and eternally remains, in an incomprehensible manner separate and at a distance, not only⁴ from all that is impure, but likewise from all that is created".⁵ In so far as the divine holiness is uncovered to man it is glory.⁵ But the essence of God's holiness is His moral transcendence of all that is created. He remains an eternal mystery. "It is no wonder that finite cannot measure infinite, that man cannot comprehend the ways of God. There always will be something incomprehen-⁶sible, something like Himself, in all His dispensations". On occasion

1. Works vi, 227 "On Predestination".

2. Vide ibid. vi, 226f "On Predestination", Notes Rom. 8:29-30.

3. Works vi, 227 "On Predestination".

4. Notes Rev. 4:8. Vide also Works v, 334-35 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid. vii, 266 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", Letters ii, 376, Jan. 4, 1749.

5. Vide Notes Rev. 4:8.

6. Letters v, 284, Oct. 28, 1771.

Wesley was led to magnify this attribute of "separatedness", of transcendence, in such a way as to render the ministrations of divine grace so inscrutable that God's activity appears to be (though in reality it is not) irresponsible - if not capricious - in the redemption of man. Sometimes God showers down His grace in an extraordinary manner; at other times He unaccountably delays in His ministrations. Always there is a mysterious variability in His dealings with man.¹ God "... may justly say, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;' ...", and "it is not meet for us to call Him in question 'who giveth account to none of his ways'".² Wesley's emphasis on the holiness of God will be further seen in the sympathy he displays toward his opponents in the controversies over predestination. It is significant that he accepts the very raison d'être of his opponents' arguments, i.e. to magnify the holiness and glory of God; though he differs from them in contending that this is better done through conceiving salvation as conditional upon faith than as predestined according to irresistible decree.³

In as much as holiness is that moral excellence by which God (by nature) is separated from the creation, it implies the attribute of justice; which constitutes God's holiness in the moral government of the creation and in His dealing with the sin and the righteousness of man. God is " ... infinitely just from all eternity ... The divine justice cannot possibly have any bounds. It is as unlimited as his power".⁴ The justice of God is to be generally observed in the moral government of the universe in which He acts as "... an impartial

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1. Vide Letters iv, 321, Feb. 8, 1766, Notes John 9:7 Works v, 200 "The Means Of Grace", ibid vi, 348-49 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge".
 2. Works v, 63 "Justification By Faith".
 3. Vide ibid. x, 230ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered", infra pp. 88ff.
 4. Letters iii, 346, Jan. 6, 1756.

Judge, guided in all things by invariable justice".¹ It is to be observed in the redemption of man in its legislative, remunerative and punitive manifestations. His justice is legislative in that He has established a moral law by the operation of which man's sin is detected and righteousness established.² Its remunerative and punitive character is seen in the principle of judgment (discussed in the preceding chapter) which provides sanctions for that law. Wesley uses the terms "avenging justice",³ "vindictive justice",⁴ "eternal vengeance",⁵ to portray the nature of punitive justice. Nor does he scruple to say that God experiences wrath in a sense analogous to that in which human^{beings} experience wrath.⁶ He insists upon anger in the Deity as the foundation of the atonement.⁷

It is necessary that we stress the importance we find Wesley attaching to the attribute of justice in God. One might expect that a theology as evangelical as his would lessen its emphasis on divine justice in favour of divine love. But we are hardly allowed to think that way. Nor, furthermore, is his accent on God's justice a perfunctory tribute paid out of deference to historical Christian thought. We have already remarked in the doctrine of man the might of God's justice in punishing Adam and his posterity for sin; and we have indicated the importance of the correlative principle of judgment. More specifically, he speaks of William Law's as "a miserable philosophy" which forfeits the justice of God, declares

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1. Works x, 362 "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty".
 2. Vide ibid. v, 433ff. "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law".
 3. Notes Heb. 10:31.
 4. Ibid. Rom. 1:24.
 5. Ibid. 1 Thess. 1:10.
 6. Vide ibid. Rom. 5:9, Works vii, 486 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit", Letters iii, 345ff., Jan. 6, 1756.
 7. Vide Letters iii, 108-09, Sept. 24, 1753, ibid. vi, 298, Feb. 7, 1778, Notes Rom. 3: 25-26, Journal iii, 422, July 27, 1749.

that this is the "one main hinge" on which the controversy between Deism and Christianity turns, and says that he would rather leave a thousand Deists unconverted than relinquish the doctrine of God's¹ justice.

We must press back further, however, and make clear that Wesley is insistent on the attribute of divine justice because it provides² the foundation of the Christian experience of salvation. We shall presently see that a satisfaction of God's justice is possibly the most important aspect of Wesley's doctrine of the work of Christ. We shall also come to see that justification is primarily an experience in which a just God consents to accept a sinful man. Sanctification, moreover, is defined as the progressive conquest of the roots of inbred sin whose offence to divine holiness is still such that the believer must continually repent. Even in the state of Christian perfection when man is saved from all sin, we shall discover that at the expense of consistency Wesley can never allow that man needs no³ Mediator between himself and an infinitely just God. These are all but characteristic overtones of the deeper chord of reverence before the justice of God that vibrates throughout his theology. And it is in this doctrine that Wesley's moral realism finds its rooting. His apprehension of the place that justice holds in the divine nature and of the extent to which it prevails in God's dealings with man, make it impossible for him to trifle with the reality of sin. The deeper his acknowledgment of divine justice, the stronger his emphasis on sin. If divine justice can "have no bounds", the offence sin deals to

1. Vide Letters iii, 345, Jan. 6, 1756.

2. Vide Journal iii, 422, July 27, 1749.

3. Vide Works xi, 396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", infra pp. 303f.

it cannot be exaggerated. Hence, it is from his feeling for the holiness of God that Wesley's firm and unremitting acknowledgment of the reality of sin takes its rise. This acknowledgment is variously manifest in his theology. But however it appear, Wesley's moral realism is rooted in a doctrine of God against Whose infinite justice sin looms as a vast and abhorrent reality.

B

God's Love

In writing of the attribute of God's nature that is love, Wesley says that this is His "darling", "reigning" attribute, "the attribute that sheds an amiable glory on all His other perfections",¹ "... wherein he glories above all the rest".² He further points out, "God is often styled holy, righteous, wise; but not holiness, righteousness, or wisdom in the abstract, as He is said to be love ..."³ Elsewhere he writes : "Love existed from all eternity, in God, the great ocean of love".⁴

It is significant, however, that in Wesley's mind divine love is best comprehended not in terms of philosophic speculation about it, but in terms of Christ's revelation of it. It is first comprehended⁵ in the revelation of God as Father. In this sense the doctrine of God's revealed love is a doctrine of the Fatherhood of God; and in the ascription of Fatherhood to the Deity Wesley signifies that love embraces and controls all His dispensations. Accordingly, in His activity as Creator, God the Father creates man out of pure love and at the same time fixes as the purpose of

1. Notes I John 4:8.

2. Works x, 227 "Predestination Calmly Considered".

3. Notes I John 4:8.

4. Works v, 463 "The Law Established Through Faith".

5. Vide Letters iii, 8, July 18, 1749, Notes Matt. 6:9.

his being loving fellowship with Himself.¹ God as Father similarly acts out of ^rpure love in His capacity as Preserver of the Creation,² although in His role as Governor His justice is also operative. As Preserver, the divine love is best seen in Fatherly providence, a doctrine which appears prominently in Wesley's theology. It is summarized in the words of St. Augustine which Wesley quotes and to which he earnestly subscribes: "Ita praesidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis".³

God's fatherly love is most fully comprehended in His activity as Redeemer and Saviour, as the "grand orderer of the whole scheme of salvation".⁴ Wesley conceives love to be so central in the God-head, in this connection, as to have been obligatory upon God's will to send His Son into the world: "... His love obliged Him to give His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish".⁵ In other words, love is the controlling purpose in the incarnation and atonement, as we shall understand at greater

1. Vide supra p.3, &infra pp.216 &f.
2. Vide Works v,333 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", Notes Matt.6:9, Luke 15:32.
3. Works vi,323 "On The Divine Providence". Wesley complains that exceedingly few persons understand this doctrine, at least so as to apply it practically to every-day life. He believes that God providentially cares for everything He has made in its order, in proportion to the measure of His own image that He has stamped upon it. With regard to men, there are three circles under God's providence; the outermost which comprises all the sons of men; the interior which is made up of the visible Christian Church and which enjoys special care; and the innermost circle which includes all genuine Christians, who are dearest and most favoured in God's sight. The doctrine of providence is further treated in chapter five. See infra pp.207f. Vide Works vi,250 "The General Deliverance", ibid.vi,313ff. "On The Divine Providence", ibid.v,475-76 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm", ibid.vii, 122 "On Visiting The Sick", Notes Matt.10:29-30, Letters iii,139, Aug.31, 1755.
4. Notes I Tim. 1:1.
5. Letters iii, 161, Feb.5, 1756.

length in the doctrine of the person and work of our Lord. As love is eternal, so has it been revealed in Jesus Christ and in the continual operation of the Holy Spirit of love from the foundation of the world. The character of this love is comprehended from Christ's work and person, suggested by the words of St. John, "Beloved, if God so loved us..."¹ One sees in Christ divine love made manifest in all its fulness. As Christ loved all men both in his life and death, so is God to be conceived as loving all men. It contradicts Christ's revelation to think that all men are not loved. Therefore, because God loves all men God wills that all men can be saved; for His will, we recall, is conditioned by His love. Furthermore, the love that God bears toward all men is essentially forgiving love. "Pardoning love is ... the root of all".²

The end of such love as was in Jesus Christ is to elicit the response of man's love. We love God, not because of His inherent³ perfections as Wesley at one time believed; rather, because He has redeemingly loved and does still love us. Wesley writes of St. John's verse, "We love him because he first loved us":⁴ "This is the sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity. None can say more".⁵ Salvation, then, is love of God. Sanctification and perfection we shall find to be defined as love of God and man. To this end God first loves us in convincing us of our sin and bringing

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1. Works vi, 235 "God's Love To Fallen Man", I John 4:11. Vide also Works v, 74 "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v, 333 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid. vii, 171-72 "What Is Man?", Notes Matt. 6:9.
 2. Works viii, 24 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Vide Letters iii, 106, Sept. 24, 1753.
 4. I John 4:19.
 5. Notes I John 4:19.

us to believe on him whom His love has also prepared as an atonement for our sin. Then, once His love has been shed abroad in our hearts, "we love **Him** because He first loved us". In such love we are made blessed in communion with Him.

Lastly, it is in the doctrine of God's love that we find the rooting of what we have arbitrarily chosen to call the principle of perfectionism. As one contemplates how God has so forgivingly loved man in the revelation of His Son and of His Spirit, one acknowledges that such revelation is a pledge that God desires man to share in perfect communion with Him. Such love persuades one that God promises and is able to wrought such holiness as renders man fit to dwell in the fellowship with his Creator that constitutes the purpose of his creation. To man this love is grace. The character of the promise and power of grace will appear presently in this chapter, and in the chapters on ^esantification and Christian perfection. We are concerned here only to point out that in Christ's revelation of divine love one beholds the announcement of the promise of perfect salvation, and the assurance that God is able to perform what He has promised. Hence the principle of perfectionism, which is a disposition to believe utterly in the promise and power of grace, is ultimately a confidence in divine love as inclined and able so to save man that he may perfectly love God and worthily magnify His holy name.

IV

The Doctrine Of Christ

i

The Person of Christ

The grace of God is mediated to man in Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, who was sent from God to communicate to mankind

the love and life of God, to restore to men what they lost in Adam.¹ Christ's person consists of two natures, human and divine;² "... that he is the Son of God; that he came in the flesh, is one undivided truth ..."³ In his divine nature Christ is from God "by eternal generation",⁴ "begotten before every creature; subsisting before all worlds, before all time, from all eternity".⁵ As God, he is also the Cause and Creator of all things, the Source of all life, the Supporter and Preserver of all, the Author of all motion in the universe, the Governor and the End of all.⁶ As the divine nature made incarnate, Christ is distinct from the Father as a person,⁷ although in him dwells "... the most full Godhead; not only divine powers but divine nature ... The very substance of God, if one might so speak, dwells in Christ in the most full sense".⁸ He is divine not only by office and investiture, but in the unity of the divine essence.⁹ Wesley's comment on John 10:30 reveals his orthodox conception of Christ's person. "'I and the Father are one' - Not by consent of will only, but by unity of power, and consequently of nature. 'Are' - this word confutes

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1. Vide Notes Matt.5:2; Rom.5:14ff.; I Cor.15:47, Works vi, 224 "On The Fall Of Man", ibid. vii, 512ff. "On The Holy Spirit", ibid. ix, 250ff., 302ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 2. Vide Notes Mark 6:6; Eph.1:3, Letters iii, 8-9, July 18, 1749, Works vi, 507 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".
 3. Notes I John 2:22. Vide also ibid. John 1:14.
 4. Ibid. John 7:29.
 5. Ibid. Col.1:15. Vide also ibid. Heb.1:2; I Cor.15:47, Works vi, 272-73 "The End Of Christ's Coming".
 6. Vide Notes Col.1:16-17; John 1:4; 17:10, Works v, 247f. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i", ibid. vi, 425ff "Spiritual Worship", ibid. vii, 293ff "On Knowing Christ After The Flesh".
 7. ~~Notes~~ John 1:1.
 8. Ibid. Col.2:9.
 9. Vide ibid. John 5:23; I Cor.2:8; 11:3; Phil.2:6; Heb.1:5, Works v, 236 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. vii, 512f. "On The Holy Spirit" Letters iii, 205, Oct.5.5, 1756.

Sabellius, proving the plurality of persons. 'One' - this word¹ confutes Arius, proving the unity of nature in God". Although equal to God in his divinity, Christ was inferior to God in his sinless humanity;² but his human fellowship with God was yet singularly greater than that of any other creature.³

The importance Wesley attached to the full divinity of Christ's person may be judged from his opinion that Arians, Socinians and Deists are the "first-born of Satan".⁴ And, on the "godhead of Christ ... I must insist as the foundation of all our hope".⁵

ii

The Work of Christ

Wesley acknowledges forthwith the mystery of our Lord's atonement.⁶ "Our reason here is quickly bewildered". But whether or not reason can penetrate the profound meaning of Christ's work, its truth is of the greatest consequence to the Christian system of thought.⁷ The foundation of our Lord's work is the divinity of his nature. It is impossible to think that the efficacy of his sacrifice consists in a perfection of what all men share in degree: his work is infinitely more than, and different from a metaphor as the Socinians contend.⁸ To believe that any one less than the Son of God bore the sins of the world is to fail to honour the love

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1. Notes John 10:30. Vide also ibid. John 7:34; 8:16.
 2. Vide ibid. Matt. 3:16; Mark 13:32; John 14:28; I Pet. 1:3.
 3. Vide ibid. John 20:17.
 4. Works vii, 454 "True Christianity Defended". Vide also ibid. v, 242 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. vii, 292 "On Knowing Christ After The Flesh", Letters i, 91, June 19, 1731, ibid. i, 101, Aug. 12, 1731, ibid. i, 357, Apr. 27, 1741, ibid. iii, 205, Oct. 5, 1756.
 5. Journal v, 254, Apr. 5, 1768.
 6. Letters vi, 298, Feb. 7, 1778.
 7. Vide ibid. vi, 297, Feb. 7, 1778, ibid. i, 241, May, 20, 1738, ibid. iii, 351ff. Jan. 6, 1756.
 8. Vide Works ix, 260-61 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Letters iii, 108-09, Sept. 24, 1753.

of God that sent him. That it was a divine One who suffered for man reveals to us that divine love is at the heart of the atonement. This is the deepest conviction that underlies Wesley's doctrine of the work of Christ, a belief that divine love in the person of Christ bore the sins of the world, and in the sacrifice on the cross atoned for the offence that sin gives to divine justice: "... it was of mere grace, of free love, of undeserved mercy, that God hath vouchsafed to sinful man any way of reconciliation with himself, that we were not cut away from his hand, and utterly blotted out of his remembrance"¹. This is the essence of the Christian "gospel" as Wesley conceives it, the glad news that through Jesus Christ God loves sinful men.² This belief is found not only in numerous expressions in Wesley's writings.³ The glad news that God has so loved man is the theme of his entire system of doctrine, in short, - of his soteriology.

The atoning nature of our Lord's work has its root in what is spoken of as his righteousness.⁴ The righteousness of Christ is twofold, divine and human. Divine righteousness is that which pertains to him as "Ὁ ὧν", very God of very God, his "eternal, essential, immutable holiness; his infinite justice, mercy and truth".⁵ In his human righteousness is found the source of his merit for salvation.⁶ Human righteousness is in turn

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1. Works v, 74 "The Righteousness Of Faith".
 2. Ibid. v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom".
 3. Vide ibid. v, 6-7 "Salvation By Faith", ibid. v, 55 "Justification By Faith", ibid. vi, 235 "God's Love To Fallen Man", ibid. vii, 170-71 "What Is Man?", ibid. viii, 362 "The Principles Of A Methodist", Notes John 10:18, Letters v, 231, Mar. 22, 1771.
 4. Vide Notes II Pet. 1:1, Works v, 234ff. "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 5. Works v, 236 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 6. Vide ibid. v, 236f. "The Lord Our Righteousness".

two-fold, internal and external. The former is the transcript of the divine righteousness stamped upon every faculty and power of his soul as a human spirit. The latter is the perfection of our Lord's life, his perfect obedience - both passive and active - to the will of the heavenly Father.

From the perfect human righteousness of our Lord springs "...¹ the whole benefit through Christ for the salvation of a sinner". For upon this perfect being were fixed the sins of the whole world. Our iniquities and transgressions were borne by him. An inherently, perfectly righteous being was made forensically sinful as a sin -² offering^{to}/God's justice. Just as the sin of Adam is imputed to all mankind, so the sins of all mankind were imputed to Christ.³ In the gift of his sinless self, bearing the sins of the world, lies the expiatory, ransom-like⁴ quality of our Lord's atonement. For "... the dignity of the person redeeming, was more than equivalent to all mankind."⁵ Elsewhere Wesley speaks of the "purchase"⁶ made by our Lord's sinless blood. The sacrifice of Christ derives its "ransom-like", "purchase" quality from its satisfaction of God's justice,⁷ "... even that vindictive justice whose essential character and principle office is, to punish sin... The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate; and inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour".⁸

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1. Notes Rom.1:17. Vide also Letters iii, 372, Oct. 15, 1756.
 2. Vide ibid. Mark 15:34; I Pet. 2:24, Works v, 55 "Justification By Faith", ibid. vi, 233 "God's Love To Fallen Man".
 3. Vide Works ix, 249ff., 315-6, 412 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Vide Notes John 10: 17-18, Works v, 64 "Justification By Faith".
 5. Notes I Tim. 2:6.
 6. Vide Notes Matt. 25: 34; John 3:15; I Cor. 10:16; I John 1:9, Works v, 257 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-1", ibid. vii, 282 "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity".
 7. Vide Works v, 239 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. vi, 274 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. vi, 428 "Spiritual Worship", ibid. x, 277f. "A Second Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend", Notes John 10:18; Col. 1:14; I John 2:2, Letters iii, 108-09, Sept. 24, 1753, ibid. vi, 298, Feb. 7, 1778.
 8. Notes Rom. 3:25-26.

Thus Wesley writes that God treated Christ as an enemy while he bore our sins,¹ and that the "weight of infinite justice"² descended upon him.

But at the same time that God was being reconciled, the world was also being reconciled to God. Divine love was searching out lost sinners at the same time that divine justice was being satisfied. In fact, it was divine love that first chose to satisfy divine justice. "'For whereas all the world was not able to pay any part toward our ransom, it pleased Him, without any of our deserving, to prepare for us Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and his justice satisfied'".³ Accordingly, divine love may be said to underlie divine justice, and the true foundation of man's salvation consists in that infinite love which was in Christ, reconciling the world.⁴

In addition to the reconciliation of man and God, Christ's resurrection conquered death⁵ at the same time that it provided a testimony to the sufficiency of the atonement.⁶ Also, the whole Mosaic dispensation, the ceremonial law, " ... our Lord has nailed to his cross";⁷ but the moral law he has even more

1. Vide Notes Mark 15:34.

2. Ibid. Heb. 5:7.

3. Quoted by Wesley from the Homilies Of The Church Of England. Works v, 239 "The Lord Our Righteousness".

4. Vide Notes Rom. 5:21; II Cor. 5:19, Letters ii, 21, June 24, 1744, Works v, 55 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom".

5. Vide ibid. I Cor. 15:26.

6. Vide ibid. Rom. 1:3; I Cor. 15:17.

7. Works v, 458-59 "The Law Established Through Faith". Vide also ibid. v, 66 "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v, 311-12 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v", Notes Rom. 7:4.

fully established in all its truth.¹

Most important, with reference to sinful man Christ's atonement provides the "meritorious cause",² "the procuring or efficient cause"³ of salvation. God's love indeed is always the final source of saving grace. But the righteousness of Christ, being made acceptable to God, intercedes on man's behalf and allows God to exercise that forgiving love in which He chiefly delights.⁴ This is the merit of Christ's death.⁵ In its mediatorial capacity,⁶ therefore, the righteousness of Christ is articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae in salvation.⁷ It is significant in this connection that Wesley quotes directly from Calvin's Institutes to make clear his sympathy with Reformed doctrine on the point of the righteousness of Christ as the meritorious cause of salvation.⁸ One can understand his remark that the charm of Calvinism lies in its magnification of Christ.⁹ But he vigorously rejects a tenet of the Calvinist doctrine, as we shall consider presently, that Christ's atonement is not effective for the sins of all men.¹⁰ To believe this contradicts the very nature of the divine love that was in Christ reconciling the world. In the same vein Wesley asserts that the work of Christ has been efficacious before the incarnation, and that his grace has been preventively operative

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1. Vide Works v, 312 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v".
 2. Notes Rom. 5:21.
 3. Ibid. Heb. 5:9.
 4. Vide Letters vii, 185, Aug. 1, 1783.
 5. Vide Works vii, 312-13 "On The Wedding Garment", Letters v, 231, Mar. 22, 1771.
 6. Vide Notes Matt. 1:16; Rom. 1:8; I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25, Letters iii, 8, July 18, 1749.
 7. Vide Works v, 235 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 8. Vide Ibid. v, 240 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 9. Vide Ibid. viii, 336 "Minutes Of Several Conversations", ibid. vi, 178f. "On The Death Of Mr. Whitefield".
 10. Vide Notes I John 2:2, and infra pp. 92ff.

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on all mankind from the foundation of the world. Therefore,
the scope of the benefit of Christ's atonement is universal, includ-
ing all men from all time; its appropriation awaits only on faith.
When man's faith in Christ issues in justification, divine grace
becomes the source, Christ's atonement the cause, and man's faith
2
the condition of salvation.

V

The Holy Spirit

3
The Holy Spirit as the third member of the Trinity bears a
distinctly personal character, as do the other members. It
is conceived as " ... the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal
4
with the Father and the Son ...", but distinguished from the
5
Father and the Son although proceeding from both. As God, it is
the divine nature made immanent. As "the Spirit of Christ", it
is " ... not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but can
6
not save; but he is Immanuel, God with us, and in us". It is
7
also the Spirit of truth and leads us into all truth. It is the
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giver of all spiritual life and the minister of God's will on

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1. Vide Works vi, 253f. "The Mystery Of Iniquity", ibid. vi, 272f. "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. viii, 277-78 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 318 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification", Letters vi, 239-40, Nov. 21, 1776.
 2. Vide Works viii, 54 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Notes Rom. 5:21.
 3. Vide Works viii, 49 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 4. Letters iii, 9, July, 18 1749. Vide also Notes I John 5:6.
 5. Vide Notes John 15:26.
 6. Works vii, 514 "On The Holy Spirit". Vide also ibid. vii, 324 "Human Life A Dream", Notes Matt. 1:23.
 7. Vide Notes I John 5:6, Works vii, 485 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".
 8. Vide Works vii, 233 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid. vii, 509 "On The Holy Spirit".

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earth. As a communication of God's love, it is the Spirit of
grace which transacts the whole of salvation. As a communication
of God's holiness, it is said to be not only holy in itself but the
worker of all holiness in man. To establish holiness is the
²
purpose of its influence in man.

Wesley is insistent that the activity of the Spirit be
accorded a central place in Christian salvation. To enforce this
conviction he reviews the nature of the Spirit's operations as
conceived, first, in the Bible. He finds that although it was not
fully given in its sanctifying office until after the resurrection,
³
the Spirit has been constantly operative from the foundation of
the world. Its activity in the apostolic age was characterized
by both "extraordinary" and "ordinary" gifts conferred upon
Christian believers. By extraordinary gifts Wesley means the
Charismata recorded in Mark 16:17-18, and I Corinthians 12:2-10,
28-31, which appear to have mainly ceased with the passing of
the apostolic age.
⁴
But the ordinary gifts, Wesley contends, are
not limited to the apostolic or any other age; all men are to
expect and experience these. By ordinary gifts he means those
offices in which the Spirit convicts of sin and begets repentance,
confers justifying faith, renews and sanctifies man's being,
and witnesses to his acceptance and pardon;
⁵
in short,
the whole experience of salvation. This

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1. Vide Works vii, 487 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".
 2. Vide Letters iii, 9, July 18, 1749, Works vii, 486ff. "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".
 3. Vide Works vi, 10 "Christian Perfection".
 4. Vide Ibid. v, 37-8 "Scriptural Christianity", ibid. vii, 26f. "The More Excellent Way", ibid. vii, 514 "On The Holy Spirit", Letters ii, 327, Jan. 7, 1749, ibid. iv, 340, Nov. 26, 1762, Notes I Thess. 1:5.
 5. Vide Works v, 38ff. "Scriptural Christianity", Ibid. viii, 99-101 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

is a crucial point for Wesley. In its defence he examines the testimony of Jesus, the apostles, the early fathers, Origen, Chrysostom; he concludes that the doctrine of his own (the Anglican) Church as formulated in its Articles and Homilies enjoin what Christianity has always maintained, that all men are heir to the ministry of God's saving grace in the activity of the Holy Spirit.¹

The compelling motive that leads Wesley to insist so vehemently on the activity of the Spirit is his belief that it is the source of religion as experience. Through an experience of its activity in his soul man finds his deepest knowledge of God. Hence, Wesley takes pains to make clear that in its nature - as well as in its ("ordinary") offices - the Spirit is experienceable by man. It is conceived as a supernatural, dynamic energy. Wesley writes, for example:

"I believe firmly, and that in the most literal sense, that that 'without God we can do nothing'; that we cannot think, or speak, or move an hand or an eye without the concurrence of the divine energy; and that all our natural faculties are God's gifts, nor can the meanest be exerted without the assistance of His Spirit".²

Moreover, this spiritual energy is such that it is as definitely experienceable by man's spirit (which may in turn affect the body) as light, heat or colour are by the physical senses.³

"And why should this seem a thing incredible to you; that God, a Spirit, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh, should discover himself to your spirit, which is itself 'the breath of God', divinae particula aerae; any more than that material things should discover themselves to your material eye? Is it any more repugnant to reason, that spirit should influence spirit, than that matter should influence matter"?⁴

Wesley employs the terms "perceptible" or "immediate" inspiration to convey what he means by the soul's experience of⁵

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1. Vide Works viii, 76-111 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters iv, 368ff., Nov. 26, 1762.
 2. Letters ii, 71, June 25, 1746.
 3. Vide Ibid. iv, 362, Nov. 26, 1762.
 4. Works viii, 198 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also pp. 77-8 of the same work, and Letters i, 329-30, July 31, 1739.
 5. Ibid. viii, 107 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

God's Spirit. The quality of immediacy is described in the following quotation.

"'immediate inspiration' ... Not indeed such inspiration as is sine mediis. But all inspiration, though by means, is immediate. Suppose, for instance, you are employed in private prayer, and God pours his love into your heart. God then acts immediately on your soul; and the love of him which you then experience, is as immediately breathed into you by the Holy Ghost, as if you had lived seventeen hundred years ago".¹

Such immediate experience affects primarily the emotional part of man's nature and Wesley does not hesitate to use the word "feeling", which he defines as "being inwardly conscious of".² Yet he takes care to say that the Spirit influences by light as well as heat.³ It can enlighten the mind and influence the will as well as stir the emotions. This opinion, in fact, constitutes the most important point on which Wesley believed the Quakers to diverge from Christianity, and from himself.⁴

We have said that the most significant feature of Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is his conviction that in its activity man experiences an invasion of God's nature into his soul. The most distinctive operation of the Spirit in this sense, as we shall see in the chapter on the witness of the Spirit, is the conferring of the assurance of forgiveness and adoption. The Holy Spirit, however, as God's nature made immanent, enters into every phase of salvation. As a communication of divine love it is grace;⁵ and as salvation is alone by grace, so is it alone by the Spirit.

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1. Works viii, 107 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Letters v, 364, March 28, 1768.
 3. Vide Works viii, 49, 188 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 4. Vide Letters ii, 120, Feb. 10, 1748.
 5. Vide Works v, 201 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. viii, 49 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

Similarly, as a communication of divine holiness it wroughts all holiness in man. Thus when Wesley insists that man perceptibly experience the activity of the Spirit, he is affirming the necessity of a saving experience of divine love and holiness; or, in other words, that man know himself/^{saved}by God. Our subsequent chapters will provide a fuller account of the nature of the Spirit's activity in salvation than we can give here.

VI

Other Means of Grace

In addition to the members of the Trinity, saving grace is mediated by other means, the Church, the sacraments of baptism and communion, the Bible, and prayer.

i

The Church

Wesley defines the Church as "the one body of Christ",¹ who is "the supreme and only head",² containing "all the true believers on earth",³ "... united by 'one Spirit'; having 'one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all'".⁴ The Church is characterized by holiness in all its members; by fellowship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost; by fellowship with the holy angels, with those departed in the faith; and by fellowship of all believers with one another.⁵ The Church visible is "... a company of faithful or believing people; - coetus credentium... 'among whom the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments

1. Letters iv, 137, Feb. 19, 1761.

2. Notes Col. 1:18.

3. Letters iii, 35, May, 22, 1750.

4. Works vi, 396 "Of The Church". Vide also Notes Eph. 4:3-6.

5. Vide Letters iii, 9, July 18, 1749, Works vi, 400 "Of The Church".

duly administered'" (ca.1745).

Wesley's doctrine of the Church, however, is best understood in his conception of its soteriological character. The ultimate purpose behind all ecclesiasticism is the redemption of man and his renewal in personal holiness. Wesley lays down this test: "What is the end of all ecclesiastical ~~order~~? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends..."² Accordingly ~~He~~ defines the "original design" of the Church of Christ as¹ "...body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation; and as far as in them lies, to save all men from future or present misery..."³

We pause to point out how typical this is of Wesley's theological procedure. His doctrine of the Church is determined by two convictions, first, that the mission of Christianity - institutionally or otherwise - is primarily redemption; secondly, that its purpose in redeeming man is to make him inwardly holy that he may share in fellowship with God. The Church thus becomes defined as a body of men compacted together "to save sinners",⁴ and to renew "the soul in righteousness".⁵ To save sinners, to establish holiness, these are the dominant themes of Wesley's

1. Works ~~viii~~ 30 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". It is noteworthy that in 1785 Wesley rejects this definition (taken from the nineteenth article of the Church of England). He is unwilling to "...exclude from the Church catholic all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines ...are sometimes, yea, frequently preached; neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not 'duly administered'". Ibid. vi, 393 "Of The Church".
2. Letters ii, 77-8, June 25, 1746.
3. Works vi, 150 "Sermon Preached Before The Society For The Reformation Of Manners".
4. Vide Letters iv, 137, Feb. 19, 1761.
5. Ibid. iii, 366, Jan. 6, 1756.

doctrine.

This soteriological conception of the Church finds its verification in his dealing with the Anglican Church of his day and in the establishment of Methodism as an independent institution. He was impelled to relinquish the high-churchmanship of his earlier years and finally to break with the Church of England,¹ because to have continued therein would have interfered with the more important task of converting sinners.² The ecclesiastical irregularity of Methodism, culminating in secession, was essentially a protest on behalf of what Wesley considered to be the true task of the Church. He was not one to hesitate when expediency suggested that souls could be better won or made more holy through conferring the right to administer the sacraments on the laity, through engaging in field preaching, through establishing band-societies or through waiving the dogma of apostolic succession.³ The dispensation of saving and sanctifying grace whose proclamation Wesley peculiarly felt to be committed to him, was here as else-

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1. Wesley defines schism (on the basis of scripture) as a separation in, not from, the Church. Because it is a breach of brotherly love and usually attended with evil consequences, schism is sinful. The sinfulness of separation, however, does not always attach to the separating person or persons. If a man separates from a body of Christians because he cannot in conscience (enlightened by scripture) honourably fulfill the terms of communion, he is not guilty of sin. Vide Works vi, 401ff. "On Schism", ibid. viii, 251 "A Plain Account Of The People Called Methodists".
 2. Vide Letters iii, 36, May 22, 1750, Works vi, 408-09 "On Schism".
 3. Wesley rejects the dogma that the Roman bishops came down in uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. (Vide Letters iv, 137-140, Feb. 19, 1761.) He writes: "... there has never been wanting in the Reformed Churches such a succession of pastors and teachers, men both divinely appointed and divinely assisted; for they convert sinners to God - a work none can do unless God Himself doth appoint them thereto and assist them therein..." ^{p. 140.} Italics mine. Vide also Journal iv, 437-38, Feb. 9, 1761, Works vii, 273ff. "The Ministerial Office".

where determinant.

"I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the gospel; 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel'. If then I could not remain in the Church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the gospel, I should be under the necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul".¹

ii

The Sacraments

Substantially the same soteriological conception prevails in Wesley's doctrine of "the means of grace".² The value of holy communion, of baptism, of the scriptures and prayer, liesⁱⁿ their efficacy for imparting grace that redeems and sanctifies man's soul.³ In fact the term commonly used to designate them - "the means of grace" - implies that in the sacraments God's love,⁴ mediated through His Spirit which must always accompany them, is communicated to the human soul. Wesley defines the means of grace as "... outward signs, words, actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."⁵

Wesley is distinctively Protestant in denying that in the external means themselves there is intrinsically resident any effective grace. "The virtue in the sacraments doth not proceed from the mere elements and words, but from the blessing of God ..."⁶ The sacraments are neither intrinsically efficacious nor meritorious.⁷ They are merely outward symbols of an inward work,

1. Works vi, 408-09 "On Schism".

2. Ibid. v, 185 "The Means Of Grace".

3. Vide ibid. v, 186, 188, 189 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vii, 148 "The Duty Of Constant Communion", Journal ii, 315, Nov. 7, 1739, ibid. ii, 361, June 27, 1740.

4. Vide ibid. v, 188 "The Means Of Grace".

5. Ibid. v, 187 "The Means Of Grace" Vide also Letters iii, 322, Dec, 1751.

6. Works x, 113 "A Roman Catechism With A Reply Thereto".

7. Vide ibid. v, 187f. "The Means Of Grace".

which, though separable in thought from them is yet coincident with them in experience. Neither are they to be used in any sense as good works or as "commutations" of religion. Likewise, they can never atone for sin; only the sacrifice of our Lord can intercede on the sinner's behalf.

In his doctrine of the sacrament of holy communion, Wesley rejects transubstantiation.¹ On the other hand, he asserts that it is more than a mere memorial.² It is a converting as well as a confirming ordinance.³ It is a "... means of our partaking of those invaluable benefits, which are the purchase of 'the blood of Christ'".⁴ It is a means through which man receives an actual "communication"⁵ of the mercy of God. Such mercy confers or renews the pardon of sins to the believer's soul; it likewise imparts actual power for the conquest of sin and the practice of holiness.⁶ In particular, the Lord's supper can impart to sinful man such grace as will bring him to salvation. For this reason one is not to object to constant communion because one feels that one is unworthy, or that one can't live up to the profession of faith implied in communion. For the very purpose of the institution of the sacraments is merciful forgiveness of the sins we bewail, and strengthening for the holiness whose absence

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1. Vide Works ix, 278 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", Notes Luke 22:19.
 2. Vide J.S. Simon, John Wesley And The Methodist Societies pp. 303ff.
 3. Vide Journal ii, 361, June, 27, 1740.
 4. Notes I Cor. 10:16.
 5. Works v, 195 "The Means Of Grace".
 6. Vide ibid. vii, 148, 150 "The Duty Of Constant Communion".

so shames us. Hence the sinful as well as regenerate are to wait¹
upon God by using all the means which He has appointed.

The sacrament of baptism is closely linked in Wesley's mind
with the experience of the new birth. Their relation will be²
treated in a discussion of the doctrine of regeneration. When
we consider baptism purely as a sacrament, it, as the other means³
of grace, is also an outward sign of an inward operation of grace.⁴
Here the operation of grace is a "great inward change", though it
must be understood that the inward change (the new birth) does not
always accompany the mere sprinkling with water. (This will also
be treated later). Wesley lays no stress on the particular mode of⁵
baptism. It is defined as "... the initiatory sacrament, which
enters us into covenant with God...instituted by Christ...in the⁶
room of circumcision". The benefits of baptism consist in removal
of the guilt of Adam's sin, in the forgiveness of sins, in entry
into covenant with God, in admission into the church of Christ, and
in being changed from a child of wrath into a child of God by a⁷
principle of grace which is infused into our nature. Because

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1. Vide Works vii, 151ff. "The Duty Of Constant Communion", Journal ii, 315, Nov. 7, 1739, ibid. ii, 361f., June 28, 1740, Letters ii, 282-84, June 11, 1747.
 2. Vide infra pp. 161ff.
 3. Vide Letters iv, 38, Nov. 4, 1758.
 4. Notes John 3:5.
 5. Vide ibid. Col. 2:12, Works x, 188f. "A Treatise On Baptism".
 6. Works x, 188 "A Treatise On Baptism". It is to be observed that this work is not originally Wesley's own, although almost all scholars have so understood it. It is an abridgement of The Short Discourse Of Baptism, written by John Wesley's father, Samuel Wesley, printed first in 1700. That John Wesley chose to abridge and publish it in 1756, however, indicates that he endorses his father's views, and for that reason we do not scruple to accept the above definition. Vide R. Green, A Bibliography Of The Works Of John and Charles Wesley p. 107.
 7. Vide Works x, 190-92 "A Treatise On Baptism", Notes Acts 22:16; I Cor. 12:13; I Pet. 3:21.

infants are capable of admission into covenant with God and into the church of Christ, and because historic Christianity has always¹ accorded them the privilege of baptism, they are to be baptized. Lastly, although baptism is a holy ordinance appointed by our Lord and to be urged upon all Christians, it is not absolutely necessary² to salvation .

iii

The Bible and Prayer

The holy scriptures constitute a means of grace enjoined upon all men - believers and unbelievers - by our Lord and the apostles.³ To Wesley, the Bible is "the whole and sole rule of faith".⁴ He speaks of it as "the word of the living God",⁵ "'given by inspiration of God'.⁶ As such it is "infallibly true"⁷ and of "divine authority".⁸ The Bible represents God's revelation to man, not man's discovery of God. Wesley's accent is entirely on the objective activity of God.⁹ "God speaks not as man, but as God". He subscribes to "the beautiful remark" that "'...Scripture is the history of God'",¹⁰ and strenuously remonstrates with those who "corrupt the word of God" by introducing "human mixtures" into divine revelation.¹¹

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1. Vide Works x, 195ff "A Treatise On Baptism".
 2. Vide Letters iii, 36, May, 22, 1750.
 3. Vide Works v, 192f. "The Means Of Grace", Journal ii, 360, June 26, 1740.
 4. Letters ii, 44, Sept. 28, 1745.
 5. Notes Preface. Vide also Works vii, 114 "On Obedience To Pastors".
 6. Works vii, 45 "On Charity". Vide also Notes II Tim. 3:16.
 7. Ibid v, 193 "The Means Of Grace". Vide also Letters iv, 369, Nov. 26, 1762.
 8. Ibid. x, 91 "A Roman Catechism With A Reply Thereto".
 9. Notes Preface.
 10. Works vi, 314 "On Divine Providence".
 11. Ibid. vii, 470 "On Corrupting The Word Of God". Vide also Letters iii, 129, May 10, 1755.

The Holy Spirit accompanies and supernaturally assists those who use the scriptures as means of grace. By its power the word of God convinces of sin, corrects the ways of believers and instructs them in righteousness.¹

Prayer is also a means of grace to those who are saved and those who are not. For prayer has been expressly urged upon all by our Lord and his disciples. From their commands and from our experience of its ministry in our souls, we are to believe that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer.²

VII

The Character of Grace

1

Introduction

We have thus far studied Wesley's doctrine of grace as it is constituted by the members of the Trinity and as it is mediated to man by varied means. We turn now to an examination of the character saving grace bears as it confronts man in his sin.

In Wesley's thought, grace confronts man, first, with the promise of perfect salvation. Second, grace is power by which salvation is accomplished. Third, it confronts man with urgency. Rarely does Wesley mention divine grace without referring to or implying one or more of these characteristics. In fact, we confess that in assembling the formal doctrines of the members of the Trinity and of the means of grace, we frequently have had to lift Wesley's statements from a context which consisted in an urgent appeal in the name of God's ^{love} to believe

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1. Vide Notes II Tim. 3:16, Works v, 193-94 "The Means Of Grace".
 2. Vide Works v, 190ff. "The Means Of Grace", Journal ii, 360, June 25, 1740.

that He is willing and able to save sinners. As an illustration, his¹ sermon on the attributes of God, "The Unity Of The Divine Being", is mainly concerned to picture the greatness of Him who has loved mankind in creating and redeeming them, and to urge them to respond to such love by faithfully loving God and their fellowmen. Speculation concerning the nature of God is quite incidental to Wesley's appeal to acknowledge through faith the love with which God has loved us, and to yield to its constraint that we may be holy in heart and life. This is typical of Wesley's mind. What matters most to him is the proclamation that God has promised in the revelation of His Son that He so loves men as to save them completely from sin and fill them with love.

ii

The Promise of Grace

In order to understand Wesley's conception of the promise of grace we must turn from pure theology for a moment and consider a certain disposition of his mind that can best be described as credulousness. It is something of the same quality that manifested itself in a belief in the reality of the supernatural, in the literal existence of spirits, and in the conception of the Holy Spirit as a dynamic agency that acts immediately on the soul. When considered with regard to revelation, it is a touch of naïveté, a readiness to believe, that must always characterize a mind that sincerely seeks to comprehend the Christian truth. Wesley perceived that Christianity, both as a self-revelation of God and as a norm of ethical living, asks to be accepted without reserve, with something of the credulity of a child. For this reason the appeal of his theology does not mainly lie in a speculative faculty of the reason through which he devised an elaborate metaphysical Weltanschauung.

1. Works vii, 264ff.

Rather does it lie in a kind of instinct of the spirit by which he was able to provide that submissiveness and sensitiveness to which the Christian gospel can make itself most fully known.

The profoundest truth of the Christian revelation is not obscured for Wesley by subtleties of speculation. To him Christianity¹ is, simply, a promise of salvation. "The substance of all is, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners'". The incarnation and atonement of our Lord constitute a testament that God will save man from sin. This is the construction that Wesley places upon the meaning of the Christian revelation. The person and work of Christ are a witness that God loves sinful man in the same way that a father loves a wayward son or that a shepherd searches for a lost sheep. Divine love is embodied in a promise made to the world of human spirits whose sin holds them in death, that they shall be restored to life. In this character grace confronts man. Opposed to the sin that makes him despair of ever being restored to life with God, stands "...the promise of God, reaching through both time and eternity"².

There is no need to reiterate here the centrality of this conviction in Wesley's mind. The entire content of this thesis will afford the best demonstration of our point. It will be seen that grace is practically synonymous with the promise of salvation.

We must further qualify the character of this promise, however, by writing that it is a promise of full salvation. By virtue of the inherent nature of the Christian dispensation, what were commands under the covenant of works are now promises. Because Christianity is a gospel - as distinguished from a law -, it has

1. Works v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom".

2. Ibid. vi, 37 "Satan's Devices".

altered into commands the promises that enjoin perfect holiness and communion with God: "... the gospel" is "... no other than the commands of the law, proposed by way of promise"¹. When Christianity bids a man believe on Christ that he may become perfectly holy in heart and life, it carries with its constraint the assurance that this ideal will be wrought. When it admonishes him to fulfil the purpose of his creation, i.e. to dwell in communion with God, it promises that this is achievable by divine grace. The heights of Christian living are not only commandments to be obeyed, but promises to be enjoyed.

"The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbour ... We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that 'with man this is impossible': But we see a promise of God, to give us that love ... We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith..."²

The manner in which grace, as a promise of salvation, refers specifically to Christian perfection is seen in the following quotation. After describing an ideal Christian in terms of his definition of perfection as love of God and man, Wesley writes:

"Christianity promises this character shall be mine, if I will not rest till I attain it. This is proposed both in the Old Testament and the New. Indeed the New is in effect all a promise... Accordingly, when it is said 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind', it is not only a direction what I shall do, but a promise of what God will do in me ... So Christianity tells me; and so I find it ... What Christianity (considered as a doctrine) promised is accomplished in my own soul. And Christianity, considered as an inward principle, is the completion of all those promises".³

The nature of the promise of perfect salvation will be further discussed in later chapters.⁴ We shall see in particular how it makes for genuine holiness in those who are justified by sustaining

1. Works v, 313 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount" v.

2. Ibid v, 314 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount" v.

3. Letters ii, 381-83, Jan. 4, 1749. Vide also Works vi, 415ff "On Perfection".

4. Vide infra pp. 216 ff., 232 ff., 267-70.

in them an expectant faith and encouraging them in moral endeavour. Our concern here is to point out Wesley's fundamental belief, that Christianity as a dispensation of grace includes as integral to its system of truth, the promise that the most depraved sinner will be and can be made perfect.

A

Wesley and Deism

Clearly revelation, considered as a promise, is crucial in Wesley's mind. Hence this doctrine must inevitably clash with any contending view of religion that for one reason or another denies the need of any - supremely of the Christian - revelation. Accordingly, Wesley finds himself in direct opposition to the Deistic thought of his century.

It is not our purpose to enter into an extended discussion of his attitude toward Deism.¹ We do wish to point out, however, that he clearly saw that the most crucial issue was the denial of the need and meaning of the supernatural revelation of God's grace in Christ. For revelation is the centre about which cluster Christianity's most fundamental doctrines. To deny that the incarnation and atonement have a supernatural cosmic meaning, prevents one from believing that God Himself has entered into a personal covenant with man/²redeem^{to}

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1. For references to Deism in Wesley's writings see the following: Works v, 209 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", vi, 54f, 63 "Original Sin", ibid. vi, 267-68 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. vi, 337ff. "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge", ibid. vi, 350ff. "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered", ibid. vii, 188-89 "On Conscience", ibid. vii, 196-200 "On Faith", ibid. vii, 257ff. "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith", ibid. vii, 509 "On The Holy Spirit", ibid. vii, 270-71 "The Unity Of The Divine Being", ibid. viii, 197 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. ix, 192ff. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. xiii, 487 "Of The Gradual Improvement Of Natural Philosophy", Letters iii, 345, 356-57, Jan. 6, 1756.
 2. Vide Notes Heb. 8:8, Works v, 314 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v", ibid. x, 238 "Predestination Calmly Considered".

him from his sin and make him holy. Deism asks one to reject the miraculous promise that God immanently and redemptively loves man through Jesus Christ, and counters with the suggestion that God is either so removed from man as to be personally indifferent to man's fate, or that man is so good as not to need redemption. Once the need and meaning of the supernatural revelation of God's grace are relinquished, the correlative doctrines of Christianity are vitiated. Because revelation has direct reference to man as sinful, Deism's denial of revelation does away with the orthodox doctrine of the depravity of man, deprecates his sinfulness and magnifies his natural capacities, especially his reason. The denial of the redemptive nature of Christ's revelation, together with an optimistic view of man, also implies that God's justice has not been so offended by sin as to be satisfied by Christ's sacrifice. God remains transcendent, pacifically retired from the world. The agent of His immanent grace, the Holy Spirit, is similarly withdrawn. The person of Christ is reduced to a perfection of humanity which differs from man only in degree, his atonement is deprived of its objective meaning, and the significance of both our Lord's life and death consists in the influence he exerts as a moral example. This in turn vitiates the experiences of justification, regeneration and sanctification. Religion therefore becomes an activity of man rather than of God, particularly of the human reason by which the Deists allege that man can penetrate the invisible world and arrive at a genuine knowledge of God, and on the basis of which a rationalist system of ethics can be established. This dispenses with what Christianity holds to be the organ of religious knowledge, the condition of salvation and the foundation of holiness, — faith. Therefore, the preaching of salvation by faith becomes unnecessary — but we need not go on. In short, Deism's denial of revelation cuts

the nerve of saving love to man, and Christianity is transformed from a testament of redemptive grace into a pattern of virtue.

Certainly the lines of combat are sharply drawn in ^{the} mutual hostility between Deism and Wesley's evangelical theology. He clearly saw that through its denial of the miraculous promise of God's redemptive and immanent love in the work of our Lord and the activity of the Holy Spirit, Deism struck at Christianity's most vital doctrines. It stands especially significant that Wesley did not counter-attack Deism in the conventional fashion of ^{apologetics}. eighteenth century. Where other Christian thinkers tilted reason against reason, Wesley preached the gospel of redemption. His success lay in the realization that if the Christian revelation were faithfully proclaimed and not fashionably argued, the reality of religious experience and the evidence of saved souls could crush the most polished arguments of his opponents. Indeed, he inclined to think that perhaps God had purposely suffered the Deist attack to come to pass in order that Christians might come to understand that the strongest evidence of Christianity's truth lay not in rationalistic apologetic, what Wesley calls "traditional" or "external" evidence, but in the testimony of the soul's immediate experience, "internal evidence".

"Without this I cannot but doubt, whether they can long maintain their cause; whether, if they do not obey the loud call of God, and lay far more stress than they have hitherto done on this internal evidence of Christianity, they will not one after the other give up the external, and (in heart at least) go over to those whom they are now contending with; so that in a century or two the people of England will be fairly divided into real Deists and real Christians".¹

H.B. Workman has given perhaps the clearest account of Wesley's answer to Deism.

1. Letters ii, 385, Jan. 4, 1749.

"Wesley destroyed Deism, not by his pen, but by his deeds. The Deist had appealed to logic; Wesley, leaving the more logical issues to Butler and Berkeley, appealed to the heart. In place of a frozen theology he gave us a living experience, in which God was not hidden, neither far off, but very high. God, said the Deist, is unrelated. Wesley taught once more ... the redeemed soul conscious of its sonship to the Father through the Holy Spirit. Prayer, said the Deist, is illogical and absurd ... Wesley's answer was to teach men how to pray ... There is nothing mysterious, the Deist claimed, in Christianity. Wesley brought men face to face with the mystery of the Cross. Miracles, the Deist, added, are impossible ... Wesley appealed to experience itself, and adduced the supreme miracle of life, the break in all continuity exemplified in every conversion of a sinner into a saint ..." ¹

iii

The Power of Grace

The next aspect of grace that claims our attention is the power with which it invades and transforms the lives of men. As an issue from God's essential nature, grace is all-powerful. As an expression of the divine will, all manifestations of grace reveal to us its omnipotence. It is "almighty" in the sense that it is ² "... that power alone, to which all things are possible". The might of grace derives from the atonement, in which God has made available to all who are helpless in their sin sufficient grace for full redemption. It is communicated by the Holy Spirit only through whose activity man can be saved.

This communication first occurs in the form of preventing grace, designed to restore man's otherwise corrupt will to freedom to choose to believe. "No power less than that which created it at first can create any soul anew ... God alone can raise those who are 'dead in

1. A New History Of Methodism i, 12.

2. Works x, 254 "Predestination Calmly Considered".

trespasses and sins'¹". This is indicative of Wesley's conception of grace as it operates throughout all the stages of salvation. His vigorous emphasis on the depravity of man makes it necessary that one understand that "the whole work" of salvation is "begun, continued, and finished"², "altogether"³ by the "recovering grace"⁴ of God. He summarizes this aspect of grace as "free in all"⁵, by which he means that in no degree is it dependent "⁶... on any power or merit in man, but on God alone ...". This will be made more explicit as we treat of the doctrines of justification, regeneration, sanctification and perfection. We shall learn that repentance is induced by God alone, that faith is purely the gift of God, that man is justified and reborn only through omnipotent love. In particular, Wesley's belief in the power of grace will be made clear in his doctrine of perfection, which asserts that God has not only promised but is able to make men scripturally perfect. The evidence gleaned from Wesley's entire theology affirms that salvation is alone through the supernatural activity of God in man's soul by which God undertakes his redemption, first, through imparting the power by which man can initially respond to further ministrations of grace; secondly, through deigning to accept him - though a sinner - through faith (which God Himself gives) in the atonement of Christ (which God Himself

1. Works vii, 253 "The Rich Man And Lazarus".

2. Notes I Pet. 5:10.

3. Works viii, 49 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion"

4. Notes John 9:7. Vide also Works v, 74 "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v, 188 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vi, 508 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

5. Works vii, 373 "Free Grace".

6. Ibid. vii, 374 "Free Grace". Vide also Letters iv, 5, Feb. 9, 1758.

has prepared); and thirdly, through achieving in him through the Holy Spirit such extinction of sin and inculcation of inherent holiness as allows him to enter into full communion with his Father.¹ Wesley never wavered in this conviction.

When grace is contemplated from the human point of view it becomes a "continual sense of our total dependence on God".² In the state of perfection as in the state of natural depravity, man is always utterly dependent on divine grace. The entire course of salvation can only be carried on if man relies alone on the power of God. The perseverance of the perfected, the progress of the sanctified, the assurance of pardon to the justified, the repentance of the depraved, - all are achieved alone through the power of divine grace. And in reply to the question, "Wherein may we come to the very edge of Calvinism?", Wesley can write: "In ascribing all good to the free grace of God. In denying all ... power antecedent to grace".³

But to say that grace is almighty is not to say that it is irresistible.⁴ One can sympathize with the Calvinist idea that it is God who omnipotently wroughts salvation, without accepting the Calvinist doctrine that such activity is irresistible at the same time that it is omnipotent. One's sympathy can indeed lead one so far as to acknowledge that on occasion God seems to act irresistibly upon the souls of man, "like lightning falling from heaven",⁵

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1. Vide Letters v, 231, Mar. 22, 1771.
 2. Works v, 257 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i".
 3. Ibid. viii, 285 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations". Italics mine. It is noteworthy that Wesley offers as the terms of union with Howell Harris, a noted Welsh Calvinist, the rejection of "all power and all merit in man". Vide Letters ii, 8-9, Aug 6, 1742.
 4. Vide Works x, 254 "Predestination Calmly Considered".
 5. Ibid. vi, 280 "The General Spread Of The Gospel".

perhaps at the moment of repentance or conversion. One can admit the vast disparity between sinful man and the holiness of God to be so vast, and acknowledge that from His transcendent heights God's grace moves with such power, as to make His dispensations seem irreconcilably variable, if not capricious. At the least, Wesley will not scruple to write that "the terms" of salvation "... depend, not on us, but on him that calleth us". But to come nearer "the edge" of Calvinism, to acknowledge that grace is irresistible as well as omnipotent, is impossible for Wesley. For logic drives one from irresistible grace to thoroughgoing predestination.

The doctrine of predestination is anathema to Wesley because it makes salvation unconditional. Hence, although he sympathizes with Calvinism up to the point we have indicated, on the question of irresistible grace and predestination he departs from Calvinism and embraces Arminianism. On the crucial issue of predestination Wesley insists that he be labelled an Arminian. The title of the treatise, "The Question, 'What Is An Arminian?' Answered, By A Lover Of Free Grace", indicates to us his position.

A

Wesley and Predestination

It is not possible to trace in detail Wesley's attitude toward,

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1. Vide Works x, 204-05, 254 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 363 "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty", ibid. xiii, 508 "Calvinistic Controversy", Journal iii, 85-6, Aug. 24, 1743.
 2. Vide Works v, 63 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v, 200 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vi, 348-49 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge", Letters iv, 321, Feb. 8, 1766, Notes John 9:7.
 3. Works v, 63 "Justification By Faith".
 4. That some men are saved and others are not, shows that the impartation of irresistible grace must be arbitrary. Since grace acts irresistibly when it does act, and since some men obviously experience no salvation through grace, one must infer that God has not chosen to impart saving grace to them. This is the same thing as saying that God has willed some men to remain unsaved and others to be irresistibly saved.
 5. Works x, 358-61. Vide also ibid. x, 378 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review", ibid. x, 417 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled", Letters vi, 331, Dec. 9, 1778, ibid. vii, 247, Nov. 4, 1784.

Calvinism in the controversies of 1741-42,¹ 1770-71, in his relations with George Whitefield, Augustus Toplady,² Walter Shirley and others; nor can we enter into all his theological differences. These questions may well constitute a thesis in themselves. We may, however, suggest the main reason why Wesley so vigorously opposed predestination.

The starting-points from which he undertakes to "paint the whole absurdity and blasphemy of this doctrine"² lie first in the supposition that logically, election, preterition and reprobation all amount to the same thing. "The sense of all is plainly this, - by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned..."³ Secondly, Wesley's attack on the doctrine of predestination springs from the conviction that it makes impossible the free exercise of the will in salvation. It is on these two grounds that he violently objects to Calvinism. The essence of his criticism lies in the belief that such a position violates⁴ the Christian revelation of God. In fact, Calvinism really negates the purpose it sets out to accomplish, to magnify the divine

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1. One of Wesley's most interesting retorts to his opponents is found in "The Doctrine Of Absolute Predestination", Works xiv, 191-98, which is a clever extract from a pamphlet published by Augustus Toplady, designed by Wesley to portray in Toplady's own words the doctrine of absolute predestination in its unreasonableness and repugnance. The last paragraph is supposed to have been written by Wesley himself and concludes with these words: "Reader, believe this or be damned. Witness my hand, A _____ T _____"
 2. Letters v, 344, Nov. 4, 1772.
 3. Works vii, 375 "Free Grace". Vide also p. 375 of the same work, ibid. x, 206-09 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 262 "A Dialogue Between A Predestinarian And His Friend", ibid. x, 370ff. "The Consequence Proved", ibid. x, 378-79 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 4. Vide Ibid. vii, 379ff. "Free Grace".

attributes by believing that God irresistibly saves man without¹ the personal concurrence of his will.

Calvinism is downright blasphemous, first, in caricaturing divine justice by making God a "devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men",² "more false, more cruel, and more unjust"³ than the devil. For how can God be just in condemning to damnation those who do not receive the grace (and salvation) He Himself would not give? How can He be a righteous judge in rewarding the goodness and punishing the sin He has Himself willed? How can man respect the holiness of Him who authorizes the sin that occasions the damnation which He Himself has willed? The Calvinist doctrine of predestination overthrows the Christian revelation of God as infinitely and essentially just from all eternity.⁴ It similarly violates God's wisdom, most clearly seen with regard to salvation in the persuasive nature of His "promises", "threats" and "appeals" to man's will; all of which are designed to persuade - not force - man freely to choose to believe and be saved.⁵ Unconditional salvation likewise violates what the Christian revelation asserts to be God's faithfulness and sincerity. For if the destiny of every man is predetermined by decree, what meaning is one to attach to the agents which God seems to have appointed for the announcement of salvation, "He that believeth

1. Vide Works x, 231ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered".

2. Ibid. vii, 384 "Free Grace".

3. Ibid. vii, 382 "Free Grace".

4. Vide ibid. vii, 382ff. "Free Grace", ibid. x, 221-24, 233-34 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 262ff. "A Dialogue Between A Predestinarian And His Friend", ibid. x, 361-63 "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty", ibid. x, 371-74 "The Consequence Proved", Letters i, 22-3, July 29, 1725, Notes I Pet. 1:2.

5. Vide Works x, 232-33, "Predestination Calmly Considered".

shall be saved?"¹

Above all, Wesley conceives the doctrine of predestination to violate the love of God which Christianity affirms to be His reigning attribute. It denies His love, first, as revealed in the creation of man. For God created man out of pure love and endowed him through grace with a free will. Therefore, to save or damn man without the concurrence of his will is to destroy that image of Himself which God has given to man, and to contradict the purpose of the grace with which He has endowed him.² No man, on the basis of reprobation, can be said to be an object of divine love if his birth is a curse and his life in this world a miserable expectation of certain punishment awaiting him in the next.³

Moreover, predestination denies the redemptive love of God because salvation by decree does away with what Wesley conceives to be salvation by faith, i.e. salvation by faith in the atonement of Christ. To Wesley, we recall, the atonement is a revelation of divine love determining the divine will to offer salvation to all men. Predestination, on the other hand, so exaggerates the sovereignty of the divine will as to impair Christ's revelation of divine love. This point is crucial for Wesley. For if man be predestined, how is one to explain the entreating character of the divine love revealed in the atonement? How is one not to believe that he who invited all men to come unto him as a Saviour,

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1. Vide Works x, 225-27, 235-38 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. vii, 376, 379ff. "Free Grace".
 2. Vide ibid. vi, 317-18 "On Divine Providence", ibid. x, 235 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 260f. "A Dialogue Between A Predestinarian And His Friend".
 3. Vide ibid. x, 234-35 "Predestination Calmly Considered".

is a dissembler? How is one to escape the inference that the incarnation and atonement, so far from being importunate love, are a cosmic trick perpetrated by God on mankind, deluding them into hoping that they may believe and be saved? In short, the doctrine of predestination does away with the redemptive love of God in sending His Son into the world.¹

It is clear that in Wesley's mind predestination strikes at the roots of evangelical theology. It destroys the promise God has made to man in His Son, "He that believeth shall be saved". It makes impossible any announcement of that love of which Wesley so peculiarly felt himself to be a prophet, that when translated into doctrine it distinguishes his theology as soteriology. Hence, although he concedes the truth of the idea of predestination, i.e. to magnify God's holiness and might as opposed to the sin and impotence of man, he will not go so far as to permit the power of divine grace to destroy its promise. He perceived that to make the grace of God so omnipotent as to render it arbitrary, vitiates the redemptive love that constitutes not only God's essential nature, but also His covenant with all mankind.

Wesley further rejects the irresistibility of grace because its logical concomitant, salvation by decree, tends to destroy the ethical holiness which it is the task of Christianity to establish. He points out that if one be either elected or reprobated, the motives of hope and fear that arouse men to follow after holiness are removed. Predestination also stifles loving zeal for the well-being of mankind which theology speaks of as good works.²

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1. Vide Works vi, 199-200 "On The Trinity", ibid. vii, 381ff. "Free Grace", ibid. x, 223, 227-29, 234-35 "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 319 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification", ibid. x, 480 "A Thought Upon Necessity", Notes I Pet. 1:2.
 2. Ibid. vii, 376-79 "Free Grace".

For, to be consistent, nothing man can do affects God's decree. Thus, Wesley contends, Calvinism breeds Antinomianism. Those who fancy themselves elected to salvation frequently tend to deny the need of observing the moral law. Knowing that they are irrevocably saved, that their initial and final salvation are unalterably decreed by God, they have no scruples about making void the moral law. In theological language, absolute predestination issues in final perseverance; and final perseverance, Wesley supposes, can and generally does issue in Antinomianism. "It is of fatal consequence"¹.

That Wesley himself asserted the possibility of final perseverance for some years,² reflects his sympathy with the Calvinist emphasis upon the power of grace; but that he relinquished it when the bitter evidence of Antinomianism in his experience with believers demonstrated its untruth, reflects his more significant concern for holiness. (This will be dealt with in the chapter on Christian perfection).³ This is illustrated in the "Calvinistic Controversy" of 1770-71, which in essence represents Wesley's efforts to check those who so corrupted the Calvinist elements to which he himself subscribed, as to neglect holiness. Any theology that accented as vigorously as Wesley's the depravity of man, the holiness of God, the merits of Christ as alone the

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1. Notes I Pet. 1:2. Vide also Works vi, 526-27 "A Call To Backsliders", ibid. x, 249ff., 257f. "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 284ff. "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints", Letters viii, 159, Aug. 3, 1789.
 2. Vide Works x, 426 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Dis-
tilled", Letters iii, 96, Aug. 8, 1752.
 3. Vide infra pp. 305ff.

the cause of salvation, and the omnipotence of grace, could easily be perverted. And Wesley remarks, "The true gospel touches the very edge both of Calvinism and Antinomianism; so that nothing but the mighty power of God can prevent our sliding either into the one or the other".¹

This observation suggest that quite likely Wesley's attack on predestination because it issues in Antinomianism, sprang from an experience with corrupt Calvinism. Pure Calvinism is hardly liable to the construction he places upon it. In fact, it tends to be most ethically activistic. The assurance of salvation provides the very motive and power for vigorous ethical living. It is curious that Wesley failed to note this truth, particularly as he incorporates it in his own doctrine of assurance. In any case, to him Calvinism appeared to issue in Antinomianism. And the same insight that led him in his mature thought to sever any connection between final perseverance and the doctrines of perfection and the witness of the Spirit, likewise led him to abandon Calvinism at the point where he supposed it to become capable of Antinomianism through its doctrine of final perseverance, i.e. at the point of irresistible grace. This insight was, simply, a concern for holiness. The purpose which he considered basic to all theology prevailed in his repudiation of unconditional salvation, and conversely, in his insistence that salvation is conditional,² namely, the establishment of that inherent holiness

1. Letters iv, 208, Apr. 7, 1763.

2. Vide Notes Rom. 8:29-30; I Cor. 9:27; Eph. 1:5, Works vi, 226ff. "On Predestination", ibid. x, 209ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 266 "A Dialogue Between A Predestinarian And His Friend", ibid. x, 284ff. "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints". Vide also infra pp. 305 ff.

without which no man can see God.

A last major objection to predestination awaits to be treated.

"This is my grand objection to the doctrine of reprobation, or (which is the same thing) unconditional election ... it is an error of so pernicious consequence to the souls of men; because it directly and naturally tends to hinder the work of God in every stage of it".¹

We have underlined the words, "the inward work of God", in order to make clear that Wesley's objection springs from the belief that predestination does away with what can best be described as "the experience of salvation". Wesley believed that the core of religion was experience. The Old Testament words that invite men to taste and see that the Lord is good, found deep echo in his mind. He perceived that the Calvinist emphasis upon the sovereign holiness of God exaggerated His transcendence to the peril of His immanence. To impose a predestinarian scheme of salvation on men makes unnecessary any crisis of the soul in which God immanently appeals to man's free will to believe and be saved. It was to this crisis that Wesley sought to bring every man, in which the pardoning love of God was actually felt and experienced, that "pardoning love" which is at "the root of all". Furthermore, predestination hinders the inward work of God in subsequent stages of salvation. If man be elected, to what end need he experience the work of the Spirit in its sanctifying and witnessing offices?² His salvation is assured. Thus, both by its accent on the transcendent sovereignty of God and ^{by} its system of decrees, Wesley believes that Calvinism does away with the immanent operations of grace interiorly in

1. Works x,256 "Predestination Calmly Considered". Italics mine.
2. Vide ibid. vii,377-78 "Free Grace".

man's soul, the experience of salvation.

iv

The Urgency of Grace

Finally, divine grace confronts sinful man with an intense urgency. God labours with a certain constraint to claim man's immortal spirit for Himself. Ultimately this quality of urgency is rooted in the initiative with which divine love has chosen to manifest itself to the world in Christ. This is seen in Wesley's emphasis on the "firstness" of God's love in the verse from St. John that he takes to be the heart of Christianity, "We love him because he first loved us". The initiative of love is also to be seen in the doctrine of the atonement. There we behold divine love inspiring the divine will, "obliging" God to "prepare Christ's body and blood" for the sins of the world. It is further to be seen in the operation of the Holy Spirit in communicating preventing grace. The very first breaking-through into the sinner's life is initiated by God's grace through His Spirit. The promise of salvation strikes upon man with a vaster constraint when he comes to know that "... the very first motion of good is from above..."¹

God appeals to mankind with all the importunity of our Lord's life and death. The incarnation and atonement fix upon all life the claim of redeeming grace, made available by no less a sacrifice than the most perfect of men and the only Son of God. The beseeching figure of Christ becomes the crucial fact for every man that is born of woman. God lays a responsibility upon all to whom Christ

1. Vide Works vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

is made known to choose to yield to His importunity. Accordingly, saving grace is more than welcoming love to the sinner. It is a constraining command that places before him life and death and bids him choose: "Believe and thou shalt be saved".

To know that salvation is promised in God's name elicits the hope that it can be received now. Furthermore, to know that God is able to wrought what He has engaged to give, suggests that it may be wrought now. The urgency of grace makes salvation a present thing, to be seized in "the very now".¹ This feeling of urgency runs through all Wesley's writings. Hardly a sermon ends without a vivid appeal to believe that God is able to save man's soul even while Wesley is speaking. Hardly a letter ends without an admonition to expect the blessing of salvation at any moment. Wesley writes: "Our word does not profit, either as to justification or sanctification, unless we can bring" men "to expect the blessing while we speak".² A typical illustration is the following:

"Live thou today ... Lose not an hour: Use this moment ... Now is thy turn upon earth ... Enjoy the very, very now, by enjoying Him 'whose years fail not'. Now let thine eye be fixed singly on Him ... Now give Him thy heart; now stay thyself on Him: Now be thou holy, as He is holy ... Today, do and suffer His will! Today, give up thyself, thy body, soul and spirit to God, through Christ Jesus ..."³

This feeling for the urgency of grace, joined with a conception of the soul of natural man as in a state of crisis, allows us further to understand the vitality and passion that characterize

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1. Letters v, 277, Sept. 1, 1771. Vide also Works v, 10 "Salvation By Faith", ibid. vi, 44 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. viii, 47 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Ibid. v, 316, Apr. 26, 1772.
 3. Works v, 392 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix".

Wesley's thought. The prospect of an immortal spirit poised between two worlds, hastening to judgment but endowed with liberty of will to yield to God's grace, compelled Wesley to announce the promise of salvation with all the fervour at his command. For the gospel has been given for such as these. Yet, although God infinitely loves sinners, the final decision to accept or reject His love lies with man. Man's destiny is in his own hands:

"And this is the very question I now propose to you in the name of God. Will you be happy here and hereafter; in the world that now is, and in that which is to come? Or will you be miserable here and hereafter, in time and in eternity? What is your choice? Let there be no delay: Now take one or the other! I take heaven and earth to record this day, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. O choose life! By the grace of God, now choose ..."¹

1. Works vi, 505 "The Important Question".

Chapter III

THE DOCTRINE OF WORKS BEFORE JUSTIFICATION, OF REPENTANCE AND OF FAITH

I

Introduction

It is doubtless clear that Wesley's anxiety in the doctrine of man to preserve the freedom of the will, and in the doctrine of grace to assert the resistibleness of grace against a thorough-going Calvinism, have as their purpose the establishment of certain responsibility upon man to co-operate with God in working out his own salvation. Against this consideration, however, we must place the doctrine of the utter corruption of man's being - including the will -, and the doctrine of the power of grace, which, differing only a hair's breadth from Calvinism, represent Wesley's belief that salvation is the work of God alone.

Wesley is holding in balance two conceptions that together provide us with the clue to an understanding of his doctrine of the activity of man in salvation. It is obvious that either of these views is capable of perversion. The view that holds man capable of responsibility for his own salvation can easily be perverted into salvation by works or Pelagianism.¹ The view that attributes all to God can easily be perverted into either the Moravian doctrine of (Antinomian)² "stillness" to which Wesley violently objected and with which he deliberately broke, or into actual Antinomianism. Wesley was aware of these two perils. In defining the doctrine of the Church of England on this point (to which he subscribes) he writes that he "...stands

1. Vide Letters ii, 23, June, 1744.

2. "Stillness" or "Quietism" are terms that denote the belief that one who desires to receive salvation should wait in stillness or quiet, rather than engage in any activity in order to prepare oneself to receive saving grace. This belief can issue in a refusal to use the appointed means of grace, the sacraments, prayer, etc., or to engage in any ethical activity. Vide Infra. pp. 113 ff.

opposite to the doctrine of the Antinomians, on the one hand,¹ and to that of justification by works, on the other ...".² "The truth lies between both".³ In order to understand the manner in which he sought to steer a course between this theological Scylla and Charybdis, we now propose to inquire at some length into what he believed the activity of man to be in the experience of justification.

Wesley's position is definitively³ found in a sermon entitled "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", which appears to have as its specific purpose a clarification of his views on this point. It is noteworthy that he builds his thought squarely on the fundamental conviction of his doctrine of grace, that salvation is entirely the work of God no matter what man does. In this light he interprets part of the verse taken for his text, "For it is God that worketh in you ...".⁴ Wesley significantly continues, however,⁵ that because God works in man, man can and must work.⁵ He can work in the sense that without God's grace he would be impotent, dead in sin. He must work, for if he does not use the grace which constrains him to repent and believe, God will turn from him. Wesley writes: "Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis : 'He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves'".⁶ The statement that because God works man can and must work, implies

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1. Works vii, 51 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Ibid. v, 453 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 3. Ibid. vi, 506ff. Vide also ibid. vi, 280-81 "The General Spread Of The Gospel", ibid. vii, 317 "On The Wedding Garment".
 4. Phil. 2:13.
 5. Vide Works vi, 511ff. "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".
 6. Ibid. vi, 513 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

that the activity of God is prior to man's but that it cannot achieve its purpose unless man complements God's working with his own. Although human depravity and the power of grace necessitate attributing salvation to God alone, man is ultimately responsible. Thus, in order to magnify the power and love of God, to exalt the merits of Christ and to humble man, Wesley yields to his Calvinist leanings in so far as to insist that in salvation God is everything, man is nothing. On the other hand, in order to place a responsibility on man, to make him aware of the state of crisis he is in, he allows that man can and must work together with God.

One may expect that Wesley was forced into what appear to be contradictory emphases in defence of this position. This is true. The delicacy of his position drove him to extremes on either side in order to make clear the perils of the other. This chapter is an attempt to report Wesley's views as they interjoin in order to define the activity that can be legitimately allowed to man in salvation without impairing the truth that all is wrought alone by God.

Our discussion will be facilitated if we divide Wesley's thought into three parts, the problem of works done before justification, the nature of repentance, and the nature of faith. We consider first the problem of pre-justification works.

II

Of Works Done Before Justification

i

Wesley's Approach to the Problem From the Point of View of Logic

There is probably no other doctrine in Wesley's theology that

offers as much difficulty to the student as that of works done before justification. This is mainly because his position is governed by the necessity of avoiding the perils of Pelagianism and excessive Calvinism, of which we have written. Other considerations also enter in, however, which suggest that we can best approach this problem from four points of view.

The first, rather curiously, has to do with a certain disposition of Wesley's mind, i.e. his tendency to try to solve a problem purely on the basis of abstract logic. It is well known that he excelled as a logician. We recall that for some years he was tutor in logic and master of disputations in Lincoln College, Oxford. This ability served him well in the controversies that entangled him at one time or another throughout his lifetime. But it also brought its difficulties. It frequently issued in what the editor of Wesley's sermons, E.H. Sugden, calls the "logic-chopping" quality of his mind.

One perceives this in the problem of pre-justification works. Wesley saw that logically the Pauline doctrine of justification precluded any righteousness on the part of man as he comes seeking forgiveness and salvation. "There is something so absolutely inconsistent between the being justified by grace, and the being justified by works, that, if you suppose either, you of necessity exclude the other ... the same benefit cannot, in the very nature of things, be derived from both".¹ This disposition is also seen in the sermon, "Justification By Faith":

"By a parity of reason, all works done before justification are not good, in the Christian sense, forasmuch as they

1. Notes Rom. 11:6. Vide also ibid. Rom. 3:24.

spring not of faith in Jesus Christ ... The argument plainly runs thus:- No works are good, which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done. But no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done because they do not spring from faith: Therefore, no works done before justification are good".¹

Similarly, Wesley points out that the Spirit's witness^{of}/forgiveness in the experience of justification (which we shall deal with in chapter five) logically precludes any righteousness on the part of man. For how can man be forgiven for righteousness? Only sin can be forgiven. Hence, to allow good works before justification does away with the ground of the direct witness of the Spirit.² It is this type of thinking that forces Wesley not only flatly to say that no works done before justification are good, but that "it is not necessary, therefore, nor indeed possible, that we should before justification 'patiently wait upon God, by lowliness, meekness, and resignation...'"³ When his thought is carried to its final issue he can make the dangerous remark that "indeed, strictly speaking, the covenant of grace doth not require us to do anything at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to our justification; but only, to believe in Him..."⁴ Clearly, this was precisely the kind of thing the Quietists were looking for!

The violence of this position reminds one of the doctrine of the depravity of natural man. It is easy to see how the view which

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1. Works v, 59-60 "Justification By Faith".
 2. Vide ibid. v, 130 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. v, 58 "Justification By Faith".
 3. Letters ii, 189, Feb. 2, 1745.
 4. Works v, 69 "The Righteousness Of Faith".

regards man as utterly depraved can logically issue in the view which deems him capable of no good works before justification. Wesley's vigorous emphasis on the corruption of man and the power of grace, implemented by his precise, logical procedure in doctrine, might be expected to issue in the view we have described. It is clear, then, that when we contemplate the problem of works before justification as dealt with in terms of logic, Wesley is saying that sinful man is to repose no faith in the efficacy of anything he may do for his salvation; rather, that he must relinquish all thought of any power or merit in himself and trust solely in the merits of Christ: "... no man can have any power ... no man can merit anything but hell, seeing all ~~other~~¹ merit is in the blood of the Lamb".

ii

Wesley's Sympathy With Anglican Theology

The second point of view from which we may approach the problem of works before justification lies in Wesley's attitude toward Anglican theology of his day. It is impossible to consider this question in detail. On the point of pre-justification works, however, he conceives himself to be in accord with the theology of his Church. He remarks in 1765 that for the past twenty-eight years, in all his writing and preaching, he has abided by its Articles and Homilies on the point of justification.² This is

1. Letters ii,8, Aug.6,1742.

2. Vide Works v,239, "The Lord Our Righteousness".

characteristic of his attitude,¹ clearly seen in certain pages of the "Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".² Here he quotes at length from the Church's Articles and Homilies, in particular from the XIIIth Article, to define his position. We detect here a slight relaxation of the uncompromising attitude he adopts on the basis of logic toward pre³justification works, in that he acknowledges that the Church enjoins works of repentance (fruits meet for repentance) if a sinner wishes to be saved. He proceeds to say, however, that on the point on which "the hinge of the question turns", whether such works are good or not, he agrees with the XIIIth Article, that they have "all the nature of sin".³

We cannot know whether Wesley ever realized the logical anomaly of this position, that works that have the nature of sin are enjoined upon those who desire to be saved. We can, however, discern that he became definitely dissatisfied with it. We shall observe presently how he came to admit (for other reasons) that works could be done before justification that were not sinful, that were positively good. With reference to the theology of the Church of England, we point out that when he revised the thirty nine Articles to twenty five

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1. Vide Letters iii, 145, Sept. 24, 1755, ibid. iv, 130-31, Jan. 7, 1761, Journal ii, 275, Sept. 13, 1739. In a sermon dated 1741, "True Christianity Defended", Wesley deplores at length what he conceives to be the heresy of such eminent divines as Bull and Tillotson, who, in contradiction of the theology of the Anglican Church, preach justification by works. Vide Works vii, 454-55 Journal ii, 470, June 24, 1741.
 2. Vide Works viii, 51ff.
 3. Ibid. viii, 54 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also Letters ii, 189, Feb. 2, 1745.

in 1784, for the Methodist Church in the United States, he entirely omitted the XIIIth, Of Works Done Before Justification.

Nevertheless, in studying Wesley's general attitude toward Anglican theology on the problem of pre-justification works, we must make clear his fundamental point: that nothing man can do in the way of works possesses either merit or power for his salvation. That is what Wesley is awkwardly trying to say when he refuses to admit that works, though enjoined, are good. Although he later came to admit that works could and should be done, that they could even be good, he never accorded to them any efficacy in the sight of God for procuring salvation. Wesley's emphasis is always on the initiative and power of God, never on the ability or merit of man.

iii

Wesley's Doctrine of Man Under the Law

The third point of view from which one can approach the problem of works is found in the body of writings Wesley devotes to an exposition of man under the law, what he calls the "legal" stage of salvation.

Wesley's doctrine of the law is Pauline. He asserts that men are freed from the Mosaic law but that the moral

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law is binding on all mankind. The moral law has two main functions. With regard to justification, it "slays the sinner" ^{of} ² by convicting/sin. With regard to sanctification, it provides a guide to conduct and prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God. (We shall deal with the latter in ³ chapter six). We are concerned here only with its first function.

The operation of the law in bringing men "...to believe in Christ for justification and salvation" ⁴ is understood by recognizing that the righteousness that follows upon obedience to it can never be acceptable to God unless preceded by faith. For the law - the covenant of works - is addressed to man as perfect, first given to Adam in Paradise. It requires that man perfectly, uninterruptedly obey every letter of its injunction. When the law operates to bring the sinner to justification, it first reveals the extent of his sin by contrasting the perfect

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1. Wesley writes that the moral law was established before the foundations of the world, first written upon the heart of man at the creation. After the fall it was given to Israel upon tablets of stone. It is at present mediated by the Spirit. As to its nature, the law is an image of God, the face of **Him** unveiled, the visible form of divine virtue. It is also supreme unalterable **Reason**. Its properties are holiness, justice and goodness. It is holy in that it is infinitely pure, incapable of any defilement although its function is to reveal sin. It is just in that it renders every man his due, and is perfectly suited to the nature of God's moral will as it operates in the universe. It is good in that it is a benevolent self-revelation of God, although its revelation appeared differently to Moses, David and our Lord; it is good in that it embraces all virtue and in that its fruits of righteousness are very desirable. The mercy of the law is shown in its uses to convince men of sin, to bring them to Christ and to confirm them in sanctification. Vide Works v, 65ff. "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v, 310ff. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v", ibid. v, 434ff. "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law", ibid. viii, 289 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 239ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered".
 2. Vide Works v, 442-43 "The Original, Nature, Property And Use Of The Law".
 3. Vide infra pp. 236, 252ff.
 4. Notes Rom. 10:4.

obedience to which he is called with that which he actually renders. It creates in him a profound sense of the guilt attaching to his inherent and imputed sin, and a realization of the divine wrath to which he is subject. It then drives him to further effort to rise to its claim of perfect obedience. This effort takes the form of works, by the performance of which he aspires to earn the approval of God and merit his salvation. Ultimately, however, the law demonstrates the futility of such works by convincing the sinner of the impossibility of ever attaining the perfect obedience it enjoins. This issues in despair of ever being saved by his own efforts. He abandons them, and turns to the promise of salvation through the grace of Christ.

This slaying of the sinner Wesley speaks of as the "legal" stage of salvation, as "bondage to the law". It figures prominently in his writings.¹ It is to be understood, however, that the "legal" stage of salvation is a state of grace, and that the law is a means of grace.

"It drives by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the spirit of love which, by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stripped of all, to cry out in the bitterness of his soul ...

I give up every plea beside, -
Lord, I am damn'd; but thou hast died".²

The greater significance of Wesley's doctrine of man under the law, however, must not be lost upon us, that by works of the

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1. Wesley's description of man under bondage to the law may be found in the following: Works v, 65ff. "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. v, 101-06 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption", ibid. v, 442-43 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law", ibid. v, 455-57 "The Law Established Through Faith", Notes Rom. 5:12ff.; 7:9ff.; Gal. 7:9ff.
 2. Works v, 443 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law".

law shall no man be justified. Hence, we discover from the body of evidence that reveals Wesley's affinity with the Pauline doctrine of man under the law, his deep hostility toward any works before justification, and his insistence that man approach salvation trusting alone in divine grace.

iv

Wesley's Personal Experience

One cannot read Wesley's graphic descriptions of man under the law and believe that the "legal" stage of salvation is merely an abstract theological category. The earnestness with which he writes of it and the space he devotes to it indicate that it had its roots in and arose directly out of experience. This observation suggests the most illuminating point of view from which to approach the problem of works before justification. Here as elsewhere in his theology, doctrine represents an elucidation of a certain religious experience through which Wesley personally passed. His denial of the possibility of good works represents a deep reaction from a stage in his own religious development which corresponds precisely to the "legal" stage he so vividly describes in terms of Pauline thought. We can well concur in the statement made by J. Scott Lidgett, that "the spiritual experience¹ of St. Paul and Luther was repeated in the case of John Wesley".

1. A New History Of Methodism ii, 428. The resemblance of Wesley's experience to Luther's is also interestingly noted in a German monograph by E. von Eicken, Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Wesley, dargestellt unter Vergleichung mit den Anschauungen Luthers und Luthertums pp. 8-10. For a more general treatment see T.F. Lockyer's book, Paul: Luther: Wesley.

The abundant evidence in Wesley's writings (as well as the¹ interpretations of that evidence by scholars) reveal that for more than ten years (ca.1725-1738) he attempted to achieve his sal-²vation by works of the law, an attempt that ended in his conversion in 1738 when he entered into the truth that salvation is by faith alone. It is impossible for us to examine this evidence in detail. We note, however, that as early as 1731³ and 1732,⁴ in describing the activities of the Holy Club at Oxford, he writes entirely of salvation by ascetic discipline and works of charity. One looks in vain for any word of salvation by faith. In 1735 he gives as "the chief motive" for his mission to Georgia "the hope of sav-⁵ing my own soul". Only two weeks before his conversion in 1738, feeling "the sentence of death" resting on him, he writes two letters to William Law who had been his mentor for some 12 years, rebuking him for teaching him salvation by works in place of⁶ salvation by faith. (It is noteworthy that his hostility to the doctrine of works taught by William Law includes mysticism. For

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1. Vide N.Curnock's introduction to the Journal i,34-5; L.Tyerman, "The Life And Times Of John Wesley" i,176-77; S.G.Diamond, The Psychology Of The Methodist Revival pp.82-3; G.C.Cell, The Re-discovery Of John Wesley pp.164ff., 199ff.
 2. It is noteworthy that Wesley writes that he very rarely uses the term "conversion" because it is rarely found in the New Testament. Vide Letters iii,266, Feb.1,1750.
 3. Vide Letters i,92-3, July 19,1731.
 4. Vide ibid. i,128-29, Oct.18,1732.
 5. Ibid. i,188, Oct.10,1735.
 6. Vide ibid. i,239f., May 14,1738, ibid. i,241f., May 20,1738.

Wesley defined mysticism also as works, which he interprets as "inward righteousness".¹ He denounces "this refined way"² of trusting to one's righteousness hardly less vigorously than he denounces trusting to outward works as means of salvation). Wesley's misery under the law is best found in the classic account of his religious experience up to and including his conversion, given in his Journal.

"I see that the whole law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul, ought to bear God's image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God! I feel that 'I am sold under sin'. I know that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations; and having no good thing in me to atone for them ... All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy, I am unholy. God is a consuming fire; I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed".³

It has been remarked by the editor of Wesley's Journal, Nehemiah Curnock, that "there are two excellent commentaries on Wesley's religion from 1725-1738", the period of his efforts to achieve salvation by works. "One is the remarkable analysis of personal experience inserted in the Journal, May 24, 1738", from which we have just quoted.⁴ "The other is the 7th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans".

We may further add that it was while listening to Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans that Wesley "felt" his "heart strangely warmed"⁵ in his conversion, a treatise which classically portrays the futility of works of the law. The conjunction of St. Paul and

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1. Works xiv, 320 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems" (1739).
 2. Journal i, 469, May, 24, 1738.
 3. Ibid. i, 464, May, 19, 1738. Vide also ibid. i, 470, May 24, 1738, Letters i, 244-45, May 24, 1738.
 4. Introduction to the Journal i, 34.
 5. Journal i, 476, May 24, 1738.

and Luther in Wesley's conversion significantly allows us to understand his violent disavowal of the doctrine of salvation by works and his insistence that salvation is by faith alone. We can understand the meaning of a remark he made shortly after his conversion, that for ten years he was "fundamentally a Papist", though he "knew¹ it not".

The Reformed doctrine of justification, vivified by his own experience, came utterly to command Wesley's mind; and in the manifesto of his new beliefs, the sermon, "Salvation By Faith", preached² before the members of Oxford University on June 11, 1738, Wesley reacted so violently from his previous experience as to write:

"Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? with his own works? No. Were they ever so many, or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree ... Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God".³

This reaction from salvation by works was necessarily accompanied^{and} by a new appreciation of the depravity of man/of the power of grace, which as characteristics of Calvinism are clearly discernible

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1. Journal ii, 262, Aug. 27, 1739. Vide also ibid. ii, 354, June 22, 1740, where Wesley writes: "After we had wandered many years in the new path of salvation by faith and works, about two years ago it pleased God to show us the old way of salvation by faith only". Vide also Letters ii, 59, Dec. 30, 1745, Works v, 21 "The Almost Christian", ibid. viii, 290 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Vide Works v, 7ff., and R. Green, A Bibliography Of The Works Of John And Charles Wesley p. 12.
 3. Works v, 7-8 "Salvation By Faith".

in this sermon, perhaps more so than in any other single writing of Wesley's. Hence we conclude that his Calvinism mainly dates from the time of his conversion, when the historic truth enunciated by Paul, Luther and Calvin, claimed his soul: "By grace are ye saved through faith".¹

Wesley's enthusiasm for this truth prevailed throughout his life, although it reached its height in the years immediately after his conversion. It brought with it the perils we have already noted, Quietism and Antinomianism. The latter in particular is taken cognizance of in the sermons, "Salvation By Faith" (1738) and "The Almost Christian" (1741).² Undoubtedly Wesley recognised these dangers. But his enthusiasm was such as to issue in certain unguarded statements which were capable of misconstruction. He wrote, for example, that it is the will of God for those who are unjustified to wait quietly for faith before doing any good works,³ that one "... is not obliged to keep even the moral law, as the condition of 'one's' acceptance..."⁴ It is significant that he was frequently attacked on the doctrine of justification by faith alone without any works, as making "the way to heaven too broad",⁵ as being subversive of ethical holiness, and as contributive to "all manner of impiety and vice".⁶

His position was indeed dangerous. An undiscerning person could easily infer that he was to do nothing toward salvation but wait passively for the omnipotent flow of grace into his soul that would

1. Eph. 2:8.

2. Vide Works v, 17ff.

3. Vide Journal ii, 484, Aug. 1, 1741.

4. Works v, 455 "The Law Established Through Faith".

5. Letters iv, 329, Nov. 17, 1759.

6. Ibid. ii, 19, Feb. 2, 1745. Vide also ibid. ii, 37f, July, 1745.

confer faith and achieve salvation. A number of Wesley's followers came to adopt this very attitude, and in the years of his association with the Moravians, scorned the observance of even the customary means of grace, prayer, sacraments, etc. This practice doubtless sprang from a perverted desire to acknowledge the depravity of man, and to exalt the merits of Christ as alone the source of salvation. It issued in such Quietistic statements as the following: "You may as well go to hell for praying, as for thieving"; "if we read, the devil reads with us; if we pray, he prays with us; if we go to church or sacrament, he goes with us; and, "the gates of heaven are shut upon workers, and open to believers". Wesley of course never so regarded the ordained means of grace. But that his position was such as to be capable of perversion warned him of his danger. He broke with the Moravians in July, 1740, and the Fetter Lane Society was split.

It is impossible to deal in any detail with this interesting controversy. Wesley's relations with the Moravians and their

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1. Quoted by L. Tyerman, The Life And Times Of John Wesley i, 307.
 2. Works x, 268 "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend".
 3. Vide Journal ii, 370, July 20, 1740.
 4. For Wesley's relations with the Moravians, vide Journal ii, 10ff, 309ff., ibid. ii, 328-31, Dec. 31, 1739, ibid. ii, 337, Feb. 26, 1740, ibid. ii, 344-45, Apr. 25, 1740, ibid. ii, 354ff., ibid. ii, 487ff., Sept. 3, 1741, Letters i, 344ff., Aug. 8, 1740, ibid. i, 353f., Apr. 21, 1741, ibid. ii, 80ff., Sept. 8, 1746, ibid. ii, 177ff., Feb. 2, 1745, ibid. ii, 214ff., June 17, 1746, ibid. iii, 52ff., Nov. 27, 1750, ibid. iii, 315ff., Dec. 1751, Works v, 145 "On Sin In Believers", ibid. v, 185ff. "The Means Of Grace", ibid. viii, 367ff. "The Principles Of A Methodist", ibid. viii, 416ff., 451 "The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained", ibid. x, 201-24 "An Extract From A Short Review Of The Difference Between The Moravian Brethren, (So called) And The Rev. Mr. John And Charles Wesley"; L. Tyerman, The Life And Times Of John Wesley i, 194ff., 278-82, 282ff., 336ff., 476ff.; W. J. Townsend, A New History Of Methodism, i, 213; J. S. Simon, John Wesley And The Methodist Societies pp. 8ff., 38f., 58-9, 176.

influence upon him also provide material for treatment in a thesis by itself. It is fair to say, however, that Wesley broke with the Moravians because they perverted the doctrine of salvation by faith into Quietism and Antinomianism. Wesley hated Antinomianism. Anything that savoured of a disregard for inherent holiness was intolerable. And the significant thing for us to note here is Wesley's connection of Moravian Antinomianism (and Quietism) with the Reformed doctrine of justification. He specifically traces the errors of the Moravians to Luther. This is seen in the following comment, which, though clearly unfair, well reflects Wesley's state of mind as he set about correcting his excessive enthusiasm for the power of saving grace. He writes in his Journal after reading Luther's comment on the Epistle to the Galatians:

"... how blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God - constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the devil; and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ delivers us from the law of God than he delivers us from holiness or from heaven. Here (I apprehend) is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther for better, for worse. Hence their 'No works; no law; no commandments.'",¹

Having discovered that he had leaned too far in disavowing pre-justification works, Wesley first concedes that works can be done before justification and that they are not to be condemned as sinful; although he continues to insist that they are not at all to be considered effective in procuring justification. In "Minutes of Some Late Conversations Between Mr. Wesley And Others", 1745, the following is found:

"How then can we maintain, that all works done before we have a sense of the pardoning love of God are sin,

1. Vol. ii, 467, June 15, 1741.

and, as such, an abomination unto Him? A. The works of him who has heard the gospel, and does not believe, are not done as God hath 'willed and commanded them to be done'. And yet we know not how to say that they are an abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and, from that principle, does the best he can".¹

In 1746 it is acknowledged that "many degrees of outward holiness ... some degree of meekness, and several other tempers..."² may precede a consciousness of justification. In 1765 Wesley goes so far as to say that works of repentance are of the "utmost necessity" to justification, although he makes clear that they are not necessary in the same degree as faith and are only "proximate" conditions³ whereas faith is an "immediate condition". It is noteworthy that this sermon had as its object the correction of certain Antinomian teachings of Thomas Maxfield and George Bell,⁴ among them Bell's statement that "God has done with all preachings and sacraments".⁵

The most illuminating statement that acknowledges the necessity of man's effort in salvation is one that refers explicitly to the excessive Calvinism of Wesley's early position and makes clear his

1. Works viii, 283, Vide also Notes Acts 10:4.

2. Ibid. viii, 290 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations". Vide also ibid. viii, 430 "The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained", 1746, where Wesley acknowledges that "the inward ones [works] such as hope, trust, fear and love of God and our neighbour, (which may more properly be termed good dispositions...) must always be joined with faith, and consequently be conditions present in justification, though they are not the means of instruments or receiving it".

3. Ibid. vi, 48 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation". Compare with this Wesley's sermon on "Salvation By Faith", (Works v, 7ff) in order to understand the difference between his early and later positions. Vide also Letters iv, 172, March 10, 1762, a letter explicitly written by Wesley to clear himself of the charge that "Antinomianism" is "rampant among us", in which he quotes at length from scripture and the Homilies of the Church of England to show that though faith is the immediate condition of salvation, works are also necessary.

4. Bell and Maxfield were one-time fellow ministers who seceded from Methodism in 1763 because of their Antinomian views.

5. Vide E.H. Sugden's note in The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley ii, 443.

realization of the peril he succeeded in avoiding. It is significant that it appears to have been written ca.1770, the year in which he was accused of "justification by works" (in the famous "Calvinistic controversy") through trying to restrain those who so perverted the Calvinist elements in his doctrine as to render it liable to Antinomianism.

"Q. What is the antidote to Methodism, the doctrine of heart-holiness? A. Calvinism: All the devices of Satan ... have done far less toward stopping the word of God... We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism'. Wherein? ...A. With regard to 'working for life', which our Lord expressly commands us to do ...We have received it as a maxim, that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification'. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well'. ... Whoever repents, should 'do works meet for repentance'. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for? ... Is not this salvation by works? Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition ... As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, 'for the sake of our works'? And how differs this from secundum merita operum? which is no more than, 'as our works deserve'. Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot".¹

In 1777 Wesley expressly speaks of those who have "miserably mangled" the "grand scriptural doctrine, 'By grace ye are saved through faith'", "wresting the Scripture, and 'making void the law through faith,'" ² a direct reference to those who have perverted justification by faith into Antinomianism and Quietism. He declares that good works are not "splendid sins", but sacrifices with which God is well pleased. In fact, he takes such pains to emphasize the necessity of human activity in salvation that he is accused of preaching "legality", "salvation by works".³ Finally,

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1. Works viii, 336-38, "Minutes Of Several Conversations", Vide also Letters v, 262-65, July 10, 1771.
 2. Ibid. vii, 130 "The Reward Of The Righteous". Vide also Letters vi, 28 May, 24, 1773.
 3. Ibid. vi, 106 "Self-Denial".

in a sermon preached near the end of his life, he urges that

"if ever you desire that God should work in you that faith whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given fly from all sin ... And 'learn to do well:' Be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy ... deny yourselves and take up your cross daily ... willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous ~~to~~ flesh and blood".¹

The brief phrase, "by the grace already given", is important for us. It suggests Wesley's position as delineated at the beginning of this chapter. In fact, the above quotation is from the sermon, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", representing his maturest thought, which affirms that because God works in man, man can and must work. We observe, then, the delicacy of Wesley's final position, by which he ~~is~~ able to lay an emphasis on man's effort in salvation sufficient to avoid the perils of a Quietist or Antinomian abuse of his view, and through ascribing all power and merit to God, to avoid the charge of salvation by works. We point out, however, that throughout all his thinking on works preceding justification, Wesley is unvarying in one essential particular, that the merits of Christ are alone the ground of man's trust and the cause of justification. Even in his most lenient statements about the merit of works, he asserts that we are saved "not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition".² This conviction was held firmly throughout the last fifty years of his life: "... I firmly believe, there is no merit, taking the word strictly, but in the blood of Christ; that salvation is not by the merit of works, and that there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can, strictly speaking, deserve

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1. Works vi, 510-11 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation". Italics mine. Vide also ibid. vii, 352-53 "On Living Without God" (1790).
 2. Ibid. viii, 337 "Minutes Of Several Conversations".

the least thing at God's hand".¹

Doubtless by this time the reader is inclined to join those who inquired of Wesley in 1746, "Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith or works a mere strife of words." Perhaps his reply may have the virtue of answering both parties. If salvation be not understood as having its source solely in grace, its cause solely in the merits of Christ; and if it be not conceived as necessitating man's effort to the extent of using the appointed means of grace, of performing works of piety and mercy, of repenting and believing as "remote" and "proximate" conditions respectively; then, "... this is not a strife of words; but the very vitals, the essence² of Christianity is the thing in question".

III

Repentance

We have already observed that Wesley speaks of repentance as a "condition" of salvation. It and faith are "the terms of acceptance for fallen man".³ Although Christ's atonement has made a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the world, it has not done all that is necessary, for man must repent and believe.⁴ These are the conditions by virtue of which salvation is conditional.

"... the word 'condition' means neither more nor less than something sine qua non, without which something else is not done. Now, this is the exact truth with regard to repenting and believing, without which God does not

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1. Works .x, 433 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled".
 2. Ibid. viii, 290 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 3. Ibid. x, 322 "Preface To A 'Treatise On Justification'".
 4. Vide ibid. x, 277 "A Second Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend".

work in us righteousness ... It is true that repentance and faith are privileges and gifts. But this does not hinder their being conditions too. And neither Mr. Calvin himself nor any of our ¹ Reformers made any scruple of calling them so".

Accordingly, as a condition repentance is "indispensably necessary"² to justification; it "absolutely"³ must go before faith.

Although repentance is an attitude, an act on the part of man, it is the work of God alone. It has its inception in the activity of preventing grace; for "the very first motion of the soul toward God is a kind of repentance".⁴ It is mainly wrought by grace in its convincing office,⁵ however, mediated to man by the Holy Spirit who "'... begins his work at the heart'. Men usually feel desires to please God before they know how to please Him. Their heart says 'What must I do to be saved?' before they understand the way of salvation".⁶ The Spirit first teaches the sinner not to tarry in despair because he feels himself too far from the kingdom to be saved; rather, that he should seize the present moment to accept God's offer of salvation. Divine grace confronts him with the promise that God "... will have mercy, not because ..." he is ⁷ "righteous, but because Jesus Christ hath atoned for" his "sins".

1. Letters iii, 246, Jan. 6, 1756.

2. Ibid. iv, 177, Mar. 10, 1762.

3. Works viii, 47 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also pp. 56-7 of the same work, ibid. v, 118 "The Witness Of The Spirit", Letters ii, 187, Feb. 2, 1745.

4. Notes Acts 20:21.

5. Vide Works vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. vii, 235 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", Letters iv, 334, Nov. 17, 1759.

6. Letters iv, 348, Nov. 26, 1762.

7. Works v, 75-6 "The Righteousness Of Faith".

It urges him to repent and believe now. "Then ~~delay~~ not. All things are now ready. The fountain is open ... O do not set him a time! Expect him every hour".¹ One will observe that the power, the promise and the urgency of grace unite in persuading the sinner to repent.

The repentance that precedes justification is to be distinguished from that which characterizes sanctification. The former is termed "legal" repentance, the latter "evangelical".² The essence of legal repentance is self-knowledge.³ It is a recognition of one's sin and a contempt for one's sinful self, induced by the functioning of the law as a means of slaying the sinner (of which we have written), and by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit removes the veil of self-deceit from the human soul and man beholds the utter corruption of his nature. He sees the extent to which his proud will is averse to God's, how far his base passions have alienated him from God. He perceives himself indeed to be "dissipated" from God. Then he turns to the fruits of his inbred corruption and beholds himself guilty of all manner of outward sin, capable of no good thing. Then the spectacle of the "... loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother's womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof",⁴ fills him with utter self-contempt. Such a

1. Works v, 75 "The Righteousness Of Faith".

2. Vide ibid. v, 156-57 "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. vi, 49 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

3. Vide ibid. v, 63-4 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v, 81-4 "The Way To The Kingdom", ibid. v, 203-04 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vi, 443 "Spiritual Idolatry", ibid. vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. vii, 235 "The Discoveries Of Faith", Letters ii, 268-69, June 17, 1746.

4. Works v, 253 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - i".

conviction of sin immediately issues ⁱⁿ/fear; for a knowledge of one's guilt before the law brings with it a realization of the judgment God provides as sanction to the law. Wesley vehemently insists on the fear of divine judgment as an element of repentance, and does not hesitate to invoke it for the slaying of the sinner. (See below). For the reality of sin, as we have noted in the discussion of man as an object of redemption, is keenly laid bare by pronouncing upon man in the name of a moral God the sentence of judgment.

It is obvious that we are dealing here with the principle of moral realism of which we have written. In his doctrine of repentance as self-knowledge, Wesley is asserting that salvation is begun and carried on through a realistic recognition of the sin in one's self, and of the punishment it incurs through its offence to God's holiness. This is seen in the following exhortation to repent:

"... cry to him for repentance in particular; not only for a full consciousness of your own impotence, but for a piercing sense of the exceeding guilt, baseness, and madness of the idolatry that has long swallowed you up. Cry for a thorough knowledge of yourself; of all your sinfulness and guiltiness. Pray that you may be fully discovered to yourself; that you may know yourself as also you are known".¹

Thus the doctrine of repentance is another manifestation of the same principle that underlies the doctrine of man. Here Wesley is seeking to make it operative in an experiential way in the soul of the believer. He is striving to establish a recognition of sin as one pole of the tension in man's soul between sin and grace, moral realism and perfectionism.

1. Works vi, 443 "Spiritual Idolatry".

It is worth our while to pause and study the manner in which Wesley induced in a practical fashion a conviction of sin before offering the promise of grace. He speaks of it as "preaching the law"¹. He writes in a letter:

"I think the right method of preaching is this. At our first beginning to preach at any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners and His willingness that they should be saved, to preach the law in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing it, as it were, afar off".²

Elsewhere he writes:

"Let the law always ~~prepare~~^{here} for the gospel. I scarce ever spoke more earnestly of the love of God in Christ ... but it was after I had been tearing the unawakened in pieces ... It is true the love of God in Christ alone feeds His children; but even they are to be guided as well as fed, - yea, and often physicked too: and the bulk of our hearers must be purged before they are fed".³

In a discussion with his fellow ministers of the best way to convert sinners, Wesley writes that one should "... purposely throw them into convictions; into strong sorrow and fear ... to make them inconsolable, refusing to be comforted".⁴ He also defines "preaching Christ" as more than merely offering redemption in his name. It includes as well an invocation of the threat of judgment in order to make the sinner realize his sins. He writes: "... you are then

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1. Works v, 450 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 2. Letters iii, 79-80, Dec. 20, 1751.
 3. ~~Ibid~~ iii, 34, Apr. 12, 1750.
 4. Works viii, 287 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

as really preaching Christ, when you are saying, 'The wicked shall be ~~burned~~ into hell, and all the people that forget God', as when you are saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!'"¹

Clearly Wesley's practical preaching represents an attempt to enforce the truth embodied in the principle of moral realism, i.e. that in the experience of salvation, man must be made aware of the reality of his sin in such a way as to be forced back on the promise and the power of grace. When Wesley's efforts issue successfully, the sinner comes to know that "continual sense of our total dependence on God" only through which salvation is possible. This feeling of dependence is described in the admonition: "Learn to hang naked upon the cross of Christ, counting all thou hast done but dung and dross: Apply to him just in the spirit of the dying thief, of the harlot with her seven devils ..."²

It has been pointed out by S. Dimond in his study of The Psychology Of The Methodist Revival, that "one fifth of the hymns in the Standard Hymn Book are hymns of penitence, and one third of the tunes in Sacred Melody (1761) are in the minor key. Many of the tunes ... were peculiarly calculated to kindle ... an attitude of repentance and hope".³ The words, "an attitude of

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1. Works v, 451-52 "The Law Established Through Faith". For an example of Wesley's preaching of judgment, see the famous sermon, "Scriptural Christianity", Works v, 47ff., in which he rehearses the sins of Oxford University before its assembled members, and warns of the judgment of God. Vide also ibid. v, 83 "The Way To The Kingdom", ibid. vii, 398 "The Cause And Cure Of Earthquakes".
 2. Ibid. v, 430 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - xiii".
 3. Page 123. Italics mine.

of repentance and hope", denote the tension that results when a realization of sin is joined with a faith in the promise of grace. One can understand once more the susceptibility of a soul in such a state of crisis to the saving word of God. Dimond writes elsewhere: "Either unintentionally or deliberately, Wesley evoked the mental conditions which are necessary for a successful revival ... states of tension, expectancy ..."¹

We conclude, therefore, that the same tension that underlies Wesley's theology was established psychologically in his converts, a tension between what a sinner is and what he may become; between depravity and perfect salvation; or, as we prefer to express it, between moral realism and perfectionism. For this reason, the doctrine of repentance as knowledge of one's sinful self is crucial in Wesley's thought; and he denotes the strategic place it holds by likening it to the "porch" of religion,² of which faith is the entrance, and holiness religion itself.

Joined with repentance must be "fruits meet for it if there be opportunity".³ Such fruits are restitution for sins one has committed; forgiveness of sins that have been committed against oneself; waiting on the means of grace appointed for penitent souls, prayer, fasting, the sacraments; in general, as many works of piety and mercy as one is able to do.⁴ Yet it must be understood that repentance and its fruits are not necessary to

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1. Op. cit. p.116. Italics mine.
 2. Works viii,472 "The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained".
 3. Ibid. viii,47 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 4. Vide ibid.v,84 "The Way To The Kingdom", ibid.vi,510-11 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", Letters ii,187-88, Feb.2,1745, ibid.iv,173ff., Mar.10,1762.

justification in the same degree nor in the same sense as faith.

"Not in the same degree; for in whatever moment a man believes ... he is justified ... But it is not so at whatever moment he repents, or brings forth any or all the fruits of repentance. Faith alone, therefore justifies; which repentance alone does not ... Nor in the same sense. For none of these has so direct, immediate a relation to justification as faith. This is proximately necessary thereto; repentance remotely ... And even in ... many instances ... God cuts short his work, and faith prevents the fruits of repentance".¹

Moreover, no matter how necessary repentance may be as a condition, it is not effective as a means of procuring justification. It must be present in justification but it cannot be a cause.

Lastly, we point out that when considered in its entirety, Wesley's doctrine holds in balance repentance as wrought solely by grace, and as involving man's activity. It is typical of his fundamental position. His sympathy with Reformed doctrine is also apparent. Although repentance constitutes a condition to be fulfilled, it possesses no justifying virtue in itself; it obtains no merit; it is wrought by God alone; and it is subordinate to faith. At the same time, it is necessary. Wesley's position is such as to avoid Antinomian Quietism on the one hand, and Pelagianism on the other.

IV

Faith

It is hardly necessary to stress the importance of faith in Wesley's theology of salvation. It has already become apparent that the doctrines of the depravity of man, of the atonement of Christ, and of the power of grace, all anticipate the doctrine of justification by faith. Moreover, his conception of saving faith bears

1. Works viii, 57 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
Vide also ibid. vi, 48 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

a vividness that again suggests that it was the result of more than mere theological speculation. Again doctrine springs from personal experience. For years Wesley lingered unaware of the meaning of the words, "By grace are ye saved through faith"; and when he did come to discover their truth, faith inevitably became more than a theological tenet for him. It was no less than life itself. He writes: "... the faith of the gospel, of the primitive Christians, or of our first Reformers ... by the grace of God, I preach ..."¹

He denotes the critical place faith holds in salvation by likening it to the "gate" of religion,² and to the "root" of religion of which holiness is the tree and good works the fruit.³ It is first necessary in that it - as repentance - ful-⁴fills the condition by virtue of which salvation is conditional.⁴
^{not}

"Christ has/done all which was necessary for the absolute salvation of all mankind. For notwithstanding all that Christ has done, he that believeth not shall be damned. But he has done all which was necessary for the conditional salvation of all mankind...for through his merits all that believe to the end, with the faith that worketh by love, shall be saved".⁵

Again Wesley defines the condition which faith fulfills as "something sine qua non";⁶ and the text, "he that believeth shall be

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1. Letters ii, 134, Mar. 22, 1748.
 2. Vide Works viii, 472 "The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained".
 3. Vide Journal ii, 265, Aug. 30, 1739, Works vii, 215 "On Riches".
 4. Vide Works v, 108 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption", ibid. v, 60 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v, 68ff. "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid. vi, 48f. "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vii, 77-8 "On Family Religion".
 5. Ibid. x, 202 "An Extract From 'A Short Review Of The Difference Between The Moravian Brethren, And The Rev. Mr. John And Charles Wesley'".
 6. Letters iv, 220, July 11, 1763.

saved", as the "law of faith".¹ His Pauline and Calvinist sympathies are apparent here; and he expressly asserts that he thinks just as St. Paul² and Calvin³ do on this point.

More specifically, faith is necessary in that it is a means of apprehending the promise and the power of grace: "By faith, thou attainest the promise".⁴ Just as repentance is an acknowledgment of the reality of sin, so faith is an acknowledgment (and apprehension) of the promise and power of grace, which, when asserted against sin, achieves salvation. To the sinner, (as we shall understand presently) the promise of salvation is the person of Christ; and it is to him that faith is applied. By the same means faith apprehends the power of grace; for it is Christ who has made all power available.

It becomes clear, therefore, that to be saved man must believe. He himself must fulfil the condition. The responsibility lies with him to such an extent that man is to hold himself to blame if he believe not and is damned. Yet Wesley can write in reply to a question so legitimate that we also join in asking it:

"Why then have not all men this faith? All, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing?" "It is the gift of God'. No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of omnipotence. It requires no

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1. Works xi, 514 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide Journal ii, 326, Dec. 13, 1739, Works v, 63 "Justification By Faith", ibid. v, 65ff. "The Righteousness Of Faith".
 3. Vide Works x, 391 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 4. Ibid. v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom".

less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew, but He who at first created the heavens and the earth".

Then with his customary appeal to fact, Wesley adds, "May not your own experience teach you this? Can you give yourself this faith"?¹ This is an important point for Wesley. Time after time he emphasizes that faith is "'... the gift of God'; the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation, which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that, believing, ye are saved, another".² The immediate agent that confers faith is the Holy Spirit. "He draws us first by good desires, not by compulsion, not by laying the will under any necessity; but by the strong and sweet, yet still irresistible, motions of His heavenly grace".³ (It is also true that the Spirit can give faith through the use of such means of grace as God has ordained.)⁴ Thus faith is not reducible to the operation of man's natural faculties, of his reason or will. "A distinct power from God, not implied in any of these, is indispensably necessary before he should arrive at the very lowest degree of Christian faith...".⁵ Yet it is not to be understood that faith precludes the reason ; "... rather

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1. Works viii, 5 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also ibid. viii, 362-63 "The Principles Of A Methodist".
 2. Ibid. v, 13 "Salvation By Faith". Vide also ibid. v, 242 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. viii, 100 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters i, 239, May, 14, 1738, ibid. ii, 46, Sept. 28, 1745, ibid. iv, 220, July, 11, 1763, ibid. iv, 268, Oct. 12, 1764, ibid. iv, 331, Nov. 17, 1759, ibid. vii, 202-03, Jan. 4, 1784, ibid. vii, 362, Jan. 1787, Notes Rom. 11:20.
 3. Notes John 6:44.
 4. Vide Letters ii, 46, Sept. 28, 1745.
 5. Ibid. ii, 71, June 25, 1746.

as enlightening and strengthening the understanding, as clearing and improving the judgment. But we do represent it as the gift of God - yea, and a 'supernatural gift'; yet it does not preclude 'the evidence of reason'; though neither is this its whole foundation".¹

In view of his earnest emphasis upon the supernatural givenness of faith, we may inquire in what way Wesley conceived man to co-operate with the working of the Spirit. The answer lies in remembering his fundamental thesis, that man assents to and assists the prior operations of grace in his soul, and that he not only can but must work together with God. Wesley writes " ... that men ought to yield the utmost attention and industry for the attainment ..."² of faith. For, although "undoubtedly faith is the work of God", " ... yet it is the duty of man to believe. And every man may believe if he will, though not when he will ... sooner or later the power of the Lord will be present, whereby (1) God works, and by His power (2) man believes. In order of thinking God's power goes first ..."³ In the final act, however, it is man that believes. "God gives me the power to believe. But does He believe for me? He works faith in me. But still is it not I that believe"⁴? One must beware, however, of analyzing too precisely the manner in which man co-operates with divine grace mediated by the Spirit. For "there will be always something in

1. Letters iv, 331, Nov. 17, 1759.

2. Ibid. ii, 46, Sept. 28, 1745.

3. Ibid. vii, 202, Jan. 4, 1784.

4. Ibid. iv, 220, July, 11, 1763. Vide also ibid. vii, 362, Jan., 1787.

the matter which we cannot well comprehend or explain".¹ In such a supernatural work mystery is always present. Yet it is to be clearly understood that although all is wrought by God alone, man must bear his own responsibility.

We now examine the nature of the faith that justifies. However, it must first be distinguished from the following sorts of faith. It is not the faith of a materialist, of a Deist, of a Heathen (ancient or modern), nor of a Jew, nor of a Roman Catholic, nor that of certain Protestants who merely assent to formal truths.² Nor is justifying faith the same as that of the apostles, for proper Christian faith was not made available until after Pentecost.³ Moreover, saving faith is not that of one who is a servant but not a child of God, of one far advanced in the "legal" stage of

1. Letters vi, 287, Nov. 9, 1777.

2. Proper justifying faith is not the faith of a materialist who believes that Jupiter est quodcunque vides. Wesley remarks, "Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!" Nor is it the faith of a Deist who believes in the being and attributes of God and in the immortality of the soul, but who rejects Biblical revelation. Wesley calls many of those who hold such beliefs, "beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having 'a downright appetite to mix with mud'". (Works vii, 196 "On Faith".) These ground religion on "... the eternal fitness of things, on the intrinsic excellence of virtue, and the beauty of actions flowing from it; on the reasons, as they term them, of good and evil, and the relations of beings to each other". (Ibid. v, 209 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".) Saving faith is not the faith of a heathen, of a Mahometan or Arabian, who may know the principles of true religion but not the "power of Christ's blood". Justifying faith is not the faith of a Jew who establishes his religion primarily on the Old Testament dispensation. Roman Catholic and Protestant faith is not saving if it is merely an assent to certain truths. Vide Works v, 8-9 "Salvation By Faith", ibid. v, 209 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vii, 196-98 "On Faith", Letters vii, 361-62, Jan., 1787.

3. Vide Works v, 9 "Salvation By Faith", ibid. viii, 291 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

salvation. The faith of a servant is a desirable degree of true faith but it cannot save. Such faith is a belief in the existence of one's immortal soul and of the souls of other men, in the being and attributes of God, in the reality of the eternal world and in the final judgment.¹ This is indeed partially acceptable to God, but one who possesses the faith of a servant must press on to the faith of a son.² Nor is faith simply sincerity. It is true that sincerity must be present in both repentance and faith. Yet man is not justified by his sincerity (which may be present in an effort at salvation by works), but by his faith.³

When we turn to examine Wesley's positive definition of faith we find that for a short time while a student at Oxford he conceived it as purely intellectual assent. He wrote to his mother in 1725. "I call faith an assent upon rational grounds, because I hold divine testimony to be the most reasonable of all divine evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily at length be resolved into reason".⁴ Obviously this statement reflects the influence of the Deistic atmosphere of his time. Wesley shortly after revised this opinion and wrote to his mother a few months later. "I am, therefore, at length come over entirely to your opinion,

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1. Vide Works vii,232-36 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", Notes Heb. 11:1.
 2. In his early years Wesley appears to have believed that the faith of a servant was not acceptable to God. This is suggested by the reference in Works v,108 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption". Compare this with ibid.vii,236 "The Discoveries Of Faith"(1788).
 3. Vide ibid.v,76 "The Righteousness Of Faith", ibid.v,108 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption", ibid.viii,288-89 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 4. Letters i,23 July,29,1725.

that saving faith (including practice) is an assent to what God has revealed because he has revealed it and not because the truth of it may be evinced by reason¹". Clearly he has avoided the perils of Deism and has taken his stand squarely upon Christian revelation.

It is worth our while to consider briefly the relation of reason and faith in Wesley's thought. Because he conceives religion to be founded on revelation, he perforce limits the function of reason, although it is quickly acknowledged that in secular matters reason allows man to conduct the affairs of human life, to profit from the contributions of human learning, etc. In short, reason is of "considerable service" in all things pertaining to the present visible world.² With regard to religion, reason can demonstrate the existence of God from the creation³ and infer some knowledge of God's nature.⁴ Reason can also assist man to comprehend the ways in which God deals with him in the operations of conscience. It is also effective in understanding doctrine, and through an application to the scriptures it yields a further knowledge of God,⁵ even when unaccompanied by faith. But at its best reason is totally insufficient for a saving knowledge of God.

Accordingly, Wesley gives a primary place to faith, which he calls a "spiritual sense".⁶ He believes that there are no innate

1. Letters i, 25, Nov. 22, 1725.

2. Works vi, 354 "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered".

3. Vide Works viii, 197 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

4. Vide ibid. vi, 339 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge".

5. Vide ibid. vi, 354-55 "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered". Vide also ibid. xiii, 482, 486 "Of The Gradual Improvement Of Natural Philosophy".

6. Vide ibid. v, 202 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. viii, 4-5 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Notes I Thess. 5:6.

ideas (except, curiously, "that we ought to honour our parents").¹
Conceptual ideas are made possible by sense perception and in matters of religion by the spiritual sense. Faith allows man to penetrate the nature of Eternal Reason, God; and being provided with true ideas about God, (which differ toto genere from ideas obtained by physical sensation,) man then employs his reason to the full. It is crucially important, however, that man begin with true conceptions of the things of God, for ex falso non sequitur² verum.³ These conceptions can only be obtained by faith. Thus Wesley states that natural reason,⁴ "that blind leader of the blind", is impotent to bring men to an evangelical experience of Christian truth. It cannot "... pass from things natural to spiritual..."⁵ It can give man neither faith nor hope; and so far from being able to discover to man the truth of Christian love, when so used, it is only "painted fire",⁶ "broken reeds, bubbles, smoke!"⁷

To decry natural reason in this sense, however, does not mean that in religion all reason is futile. On the contrary, once faith has been acknowledged as primary, and revelation as prior to speculation, reason is indispensable. Wesley writes: "... I

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1. Vide Works vii, 98 "On Obedience To Parents".
 2. Vide Ibid. viii, 12ff. "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Vide ibid. vi, 196 "On Eternity", ibid. vii, 326ff. "On Faith", ibid. vii, 231ff. "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid. vii, 195ff. "On Faith", ibid. vii, 256ff. "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith", Letters ii, 383, Jan. 4, 1749.
 4. Works vi, 209 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 5. Ibid. viii, 14 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 6. Ibid. vi, 359 "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered".
 7. Ibid. vi, 268 "The End Of Christ's Coming", Vide also Notes Acts 17:18.

would just as soon put out my eyes to secure my faith, as lay
aside my reason";¹ "... it is only by ... using all the under-
standing which God hath given us, that we can have a conscience
void of offence..."²

When faith operates as a spiritual sense in justification,
it is an intuitive faculty³ that employs the whole of man's
spiritual nature, the mind, the emotions and the will. It probably
least involves the rational faculty although Wesley affirms that
intellectual assent is one "ingredient" of faith.⁴ Its emotional
character is appreciated in his definition of faith as more than
"a speculative, rational thing, a cold lifeless assent"; rather
is it "a disposition of the heart".⁵ This disposition of the
mind and heart crystallizes in a sudden, deliberate act of the
human will, and we "... see not by a chain of reasoning, but by
a kind of intuition, by a direct view..."⁶ When applied directly⁷
to Christ it becomes "a closing with him, and cleaving to him".

As an attitude of the soul, faith is defined as "... a power,
wrought by the Almighty in an immortal spirit, inhabiting an
house of clay, to see through the veil into the world of spirits,
into things invisible and eternal; a power to discern those
things which with eyes of flesh and blood no man hath seen or

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1. Works x, 267 "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend".
 2. Ibid. vi, 355 "The Case Of Reason Impartially Considered". Vide.
also Notes I Cor. 14:20.
 3. Vide Letters iii, 174, Nov. 16, 1756.
 4. Vide Ibid. ii, 46, Sept. 28, 1745.
 5. Works v, 9 "Salvation By Faith".
 6. Ibid. vi, 274 "The End Of Christ's Coming".
 7. Ibid. v, 9 "Salvation By Faith".

can see..."¹ It is a supernatural ἑλεγχος,² wrought by the Spirit, "... a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perception thereof".³ Thus faith affirms the existence of the eternal spiritual world at the same time that it enjoys a knowledge of it.⁴

The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray,
With strong commanding evidence
Their heavenly origin display.

Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
Th' Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.⁵

This knowledge of the invisible world is essentially a knowledge of God.⁶ Furthermore, it is a special kind of knowledge of God, that is, that God is love, and that He has first loved man in the gift of His Son. Faith is a confidence in God's mercy. This confidence is elicited in man's soul by the revelation of the nature of God's love in the person and work of our Lord. "'For a good man', says" St. Paul, "'peradventure one would even dare to die. But God commendeth', 'unspeakably, inconceivably, beyond all human precedent, 'his love to us; in that while we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly'. Here is the ground, the real and only ground ..." for true Christian faith.⁷

1. Letters ii, 381-82 Jan. 4, 1749.

2. Vide Works viii, 276 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

3. Ibid. vi, 46 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

4. Vide ibid. vii, 256ff. "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith", ibid. vii, 326ff. "On Faith".

5. Quoted by Wesley in Works viii, 352 "Advice To The People Called Methodists". Vide also ibid. vi, 196 "On Eternity", Notes I Tim. 6:11

6. Vide Works vii, 223 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

7. ~~Ibid.~~ ix, 327. "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

Wesley desires that faith first comprehend the kind of love our Father has bestowed upon us, for "a confidence in a pardoning God is essential to saving faith". The assurance that God loves men, however, is not only to be inferred from the incarnation and atonement. It is immediately communicated by a testimony of the Spirit that precedes both man's faith in and love of God, a witness of assurance, however, that is not to be confused with a witness of pardon or adoption. It is more properly "an earnest", "a sense and persuasion of God's love to man in Christ Jesus". Hence, in a very profound sense faith is the gift of grace. For it is given

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1. Vide Works viii, 22-3 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Ibid. viii, 24 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. The assurance that God loves man is not to be confused with a sense of pardon of sins. For some years Wesley laboured under this misapprehension. He was fond of quoting the Homily on Salvation of the Church of England, which defined faith as "'... a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that ... his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God'...". Wesley frequently used this definition up to 1747. It is found, for example, in his sermon preached before the University of Oxford, "The Almost Christian", 1741. (Vide Works v, 23). But this definition, according to J. Telford, the editor of Wesley's Letters, was repudiated in 1747, probably because of changes wrought in Wesley's thinking by the Bishop of Oxford. In Letters ii, 108f., July 31, 1747, Wesley writes: "Is justifying faith a sense of pardon? Negatur ... By justifying faith I mean that faith which whosoever hath not is under the wrath and curse of God. By a sense of pardon I mean a distinct, explicit assurance that my sins are forgiven. I allow (1) that there is such an explicit assurance; (2) that it is the common privilege of real Christians; (3) that it is the proper Christian faith, which purifieth the heart and overcometh the world. But I cannot allow that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected therewith. Because, if justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit sense of pardon, then every one who has it not, and every one so long as he has it not, is under the wrath and curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture as well as to experience ... Again, the assertion that justifying faith is a sense of pardon is contrary to reason; it is flatly absurd. For how can a sense of our having received pardon be the condition of receiving it"? Vide also Letters vii, 61, May, 21, 1781.
 4. Works viii, 287 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 5. Letters ii, 38, July, 1745. Vide also ibid. vii, 61, May, 21, 1781, ibid. vii, 66, May, 28, 1781, Works v, 116 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. vi, 47, "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

through both the promise of divine mercy as seen in cosmic proportions in the incarnation and atonement, and through the personal assurance of the Spirit to the soul of the sinner.

Such confidence in the mercy of God took form for Wesley in the words of the Anglican Homily on Salvation: Faith "¹... is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God ..."; that "²... God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself". Eventually he came to revise this definition (as we have observed in a footnote on the preceding page), as he saw that logically it implied a distinct assurance of pardon as the ground of subsequent pardon in justification, which is absurd. Yet his sympathy^t for this definition is instructive for us, as, aside from manifesting his loyalty to the teaching of his Church, it represents his conviction that a realization of God's love is the ground of man's response of faith. Wesley may have so wanted to assure sinners that God forgivingly loves man, that he inclined at the expense of logic to the definition we have quoted.

However, perhaps we press the point too far. "The substance of all is, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners'; or,³ 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son ...'". In any case, Wesley's concern is to connect faith with the promise

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1. Works v, 23 "The Almost Christian". Vide also ibid. xiii, 499f. "Conversation With The Bishop Of Bristol (Bishop Butler)", Letters ii, 269, June 17, 1746.
 2. Ibid. viii, 48 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also ibid. v, 60-1 "Justification By Faith", ibid. vi, 47 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 3. Ibid. v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom".

of salvation given to man in Jesus Christ. This is more clearly seen in the final definition of faith that occurs most frequently in his writings.

"Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as ... our salvation".¹

One will observe in this definition Wesley's emphasis upon the personal, direct appeal of Christ's work and person to man, "our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us". In many places he uses the personal pronoun, "I"; thus, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me".² It is this personal sense of Christ's atoning blood that is at the heart of faith. The sinner suddenly feels that the very God of the universe through such love as was in Christ Jesus is eagerly seeking him out to save him from his sin. The conviction strikes upon him/^{that} the suffering of the crucifixion and the triumph of the resurrection are meant for him, that these things have somehow happened in the wisdom and love of God with the direct purpose of bringing him unto salvation. No longer can he resist the promise of grace when he knows in his very soul that it is for him that his Lord died and rose. Truly, such knowledge is too wonderful for him. His defences of pride and self-righteousness are broken down. The poignant realization that it was even for such sinners as he that Christ's blood was shed, overpowers his soul. He cannot but respond with his entire being, casting himself upon Christ, trusting alone in Him for salvation.

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1. Works v, 9 "Salvation By Faith".
 2. Wesley also generally prints these pronouns in italics. Vide ibid. v, 60-1 "Justification By Faith", ibid. vi, 47 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vi, 64 "Original Sin", ibid. viii, 276 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Letters iii, 110, Sept. 24, 1753, ibid. iii, 222, Sept. 19, 1757, ibid. iii, 232, Nov. 1, 1757, ibid. iv, 34, Oct. 4, 1758, ibid. iv, 116, Dec. 1, 1760.

It is to be noted, however, that in his definition of faith as trust in the merits of Christ, Wesley does not forget the prior satisfaction of God's justice whereby God is reconciled to the world and the world to God. Although pardoning love is at the root of all, Wesley is unwilling to conceive of a sinner coming to God without his vividly realizing that were it not for the death of Christ, God's justice could never be appeased, His love made redemptive, and the sinner himself made acceptable to God. We shall observe in the next chapter that the justice of God is to be reckoned with as well as His mercy in the experience of justification.

Yet, ultimately, faith is a trust in saving love. It is above all a confidence that this love is such as the atonement witnesses. Thus faith is Christ-centred. The sinner believes on him as God, and as man crucified for the world's sins. In a more general sense, faith is also directed to God as it is a belief in the unseen supernatural world. But in a specifically soteriological sense, "...it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it".¹ It is faith in Christ's revelation of how "God SO loved us",² that lays hold on the promise of salvation, and that allows the full power of renewing grace to surge through and transform the sinner's soul.

1. Works v, 9 "Salvation By Faith". Vide also Notes. Heb. 11:1
2. Vide Works vi, 235 "God's Love To Fallen Man".

Chapter IV

JUSTIFICATION, REGENERATION, AND ADOPTION

I

Introduction

Wesley's doctrines of justification, regeneration and adoption, contain little that is of a distinctive character. Their affinity with Reformed theology (which will be discussed in a later section) is unmistakably clear. We have chosen, therefore, to deal with them in a more summary manner than with other doctrines of Wesley's theology. Nevertheless, justification and regeneration constitute the initial experience of salvation for the sinner. They are vital to Wesley's soteriology in this respect. Accordingly, although they are familiar to us, to omit them or to fail to make clear their importance would be to impair Wesley's theology as a theology of salvation.

We first discuss briefly the relation between justification and regeneration.

II

The Relation Of Justification to Regeneration

In a recent study entitled The Rediscovery of John Wesley, G.C. Cell has remarked that righteousness is the integrating idea of Wesley's theology.¹ He means by this that Wesley's doctrines assume their true significance and reveal their relation with one another, when approached with the understanding that Wesley's theology is primarily designed to make sinful men righteous before God. This observation particularly applies to the doctrines of justification and regeneration. These represent, as it were, variations of an underlying theme, the theme of righteousness. The former has to do

with formal imputed righteousness; the latter has to do with actual inherent righteousness. Righteousness is opposed to sin. Imputed righteousness is opposed to guilt and condemnation incurred by sin. Inherent righteousness is opposed to the reality of sin. God desires most of all to extinguish sin completely in man by regenerating and sanctifying him. But before this can be done, the sin which prevents man from being acceptable to God must be so construed, and the just wrath which disinclines God to accept him must be so conciliated, as to allow God further to deal with man. This reconciliation takes place in justification. Hence Wesley speaks of justification as the "gate" of religion, as a "fundamental" doctrine.¹ He defines the relation between justification and regeneration as follows:

"Justification implies only a relative, the new birth a real change. God in justifying us does something for us; in begetting us again, he does the work in us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image, of God. The one is the taking away the guilt, the other the taking away the power, of sin: So that, although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures".²

Wesley's last statement that justification and regeneration are "joined together in point of time", needs a slight explanation. It

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1. Vide Works vi, 65-6 "The New Birth", ibid. vii, 212 "On God's Vineyard".
 2. Ibid. v, 224 "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God". Wesley seems to be occasionally confused in the relation of faith, justification, regeneration and sanctification, though his confusion is more often of terms than of the content of these doctrines. In his early years he definitely mistook justification for sanctification (Vide Letters i, 47f. Feb. 28, 1730, ibid. viii, 12, Sept. 26, 1787). The editor of The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley, E. Sugden (see vol. i, 36, 45), and the biographer, L. Tyerman, (The Life and Times Of John Wesley, vol. i, 230) also believe that Wesley definitely tended to confuse regeneration with justification. However, in his mature thought he disposed of this confusion and made unmistakably clear the relation of these doctrines. Consult the sermons, "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God", and, "The New Birth", Works v, 223ff., vi, 65ff., respectively.

is to be understood that the change wrought in the formal relation between God and the sinner in justification, and the transformation from sin to righteousness wrought inwardly in man's nature in regeneration, are simultaneous in experience although the former precedes the latter in thought. In other words, justification, regeneration, adoption (which is the issue of regeneration) and the witness of the Spirit (which seals all three), are coincident in experience though separate in logical analysis. In order to elucidate the nature of these doctrines we treat them separately.

III

Justification

We can best approach Wesley's doctrine of justification by quoting a paraphrase of a Homily of the Church of England which he uses to define the nature of man's initial reconciliation to God.

"I believe, three things must go together in our justification: Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice, by the offering his body, and shedding his blood; and upon our part, true and living faith in the merits of Christ. So that in our justification there is not only God's mercy and grace, but his justice also. And so the grace of God does not shut out the righteousness of God in our justification; but only shuts out the righteousness of man, that is, the righteousness of our works".¹

This statement suggests that we may briefly study in order the activity of God, of Christ, and of man in justification.

One will observe Wesley's insistence that God's justice and love correlatively prevail in justification. The attribute of justice has direct reference to the sin which stands as a barrier between man and God. For this reason Wesley writes that justification rests

1. Works viii, 361-62 "The Principle Of A Methodist". Vide also ibid. v, 239 "The Lord Our Righteousness".

1

squarely on the doctrine of man as originally sinful, which affirms that because of his imputed and inherent sin man is the object of condemnation and wrath. The might of the wrath with which man must deal may be gauged by two considerations, first, by the place Wesley accords to the attribute of justice in the doctrine of God. We recall his statement that divine justice cannot possibly have any bounds, that it is as unlimited as God's omnipotence or eternity, and that in its punitive function it is "avenging", "vindictive". Secondly, the might of divine wrath is in direct proportion to the heinousness of the original sin that first offended God's justice, and of the recurring sin of all mankind that continues to offend it. Sin, we remember, is original to all the generations of men, is universal in mankind, and constitutes every individual "entirely depraved". These two considerations conspire to make the just wrath of God an awful thing to be dealt with in the reconciliation of a sinner.

Against this, however, is placed Wesley's doctrine of the work of Christ, the most distinctive feature of which is the satisfaction of divine justice and the atonement for man's sin. Christ has done what man could never do. The sacrifice of his perfectly righteous self has been accepted by God because "the attribute of justice" has been "preserved inviolate", (even that vindictive justice whose essential character and principal office is, to punish sin,) by "a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour". Therefore, "what

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1. Vide Works v, 54-6 "Justification By Faith", ibid. viii, 361 "The Principles Of A Methodist".
 2. Notes Rom. 3:25-6.

Christ has done is the foundation of our justification...¹ and he is spoken of as the "sole meritorious cause"² of redemption.

Wesley is able to say: "The admission of believers to God through Christ flows even from the justice of God".³

Man's activity in justification consists in apprehending the merits of Christ's death through faith. "For faith justifies only as it refers to, and depends on, Christ".⁴ Joined with faith must be a rejection of all thought of merit or worthiness in oneself. Repentance must completely have had its way with the sinner. "First, we receive the sentence of death in ourselves: Then, we trust in Him that lived and died for us".⁵ Man cannot believe in Christ "as given for him, and living in him", however, without realizing that although the atonement is a satisfaction of infinite justice, it is a profounder witness of infinite love. God's love claims his soul as mysteriously as His wrath terrifies it. For the sinner knows that God Himself has prepared for us "... Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and his justice satisfied".⁶ Man sees in Christ divine love reconciling divine justice.

The realization that "pardoning love is at the root of all" is heightened by a knowledge that the very faith by which he "lays hold"⁷ on Christ is the gift of God. Similarly, the power of his will to choose to believe and be saved is supernaturally given

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1. Works x, 322 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification".
 2. Ibid. vi, 178 "On The Death Of The Rev. Mr. George Whitefield". Vide also Letters v, 231, Mar. 22, 1771.
 3. Notes John 17:25.
 4. Ibid. Heb. 11:1.
 5. Works v, 241 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 6. Ibid. v, 239 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 7. Letters vi, 220, May 28, 1776.

by God. Indeed in a very profound sense, "upon God's part are his great mercy and grace". For God Himself, Who is infinitely just from all eternity, has chosen even while we were yet sinners to undertake the whole work of salvation; first, in providing the cause of it, Jesus Christ; secondly, in beseeching man's soul (through preventing grace) and conferring the power to receive it ~~through~~ the Holy Spirit; thirdly, in assisting man to fulfil the condition and giving him the means of appropriating it, -
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faith. Indeed, salvation is "of grace, of grace alone".

The conjunction of God's activity, of Christ's work and of man's repentance and faith, is seen in the following:

"For the sinner, being first convinced of his sin and danger by the Spirit of God, stands ~~st~~trembling before the awful tribunal of divine justice... Christ here interposes; justice is satisfied; the sin is remitted, and pardon is applied to the soul, by a divine faith wrought by the Holy Ghost... Thus God justifies the ungodly, and yet remains just, and true to all his attributes!" 2

Now that we have broadly surveyed the relation to justification of Wesley's doctrines of God, of Christ's work, and of man's repentance and faith, we inquire in more detail into the actual experience of justification itself. We find that it possesses three aspects. It is first the imputation of righteousness to the sinner; second, the forgiveness^e of sins; third, release from guilt and condemnation. These, however, are simultaneous in experience. "We may observe here, forgiveness, not imputing sin,

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1. Works viii, 25 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". This fundamental position prevailed throughout Wesley's ministry after his conversion. He writes in 1777 that very early, ca. 1739, "... we were clear on justification by faith, and careful to ascribe the whole of salvation to the mere grace of God". Ibid. xi, 374 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Notes Rom. 4:5.

and imputing righteousness, are all one".¹ We consider first the doctrine of imputed righteousness.

i

The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness

2

This doctrine has direct reference to our Lord's atonement.² The salvation offered therein consists in the "human" righteousness that pertained to Christ as a man,³ which, because it has been made acceptable to God, is as effectual for obtaining pardon as if it were the sinner's own.⁴ It needs only to be appropriated by faith in order to intercede on man's behalf with God. Accordingly, when the sinner despairingly cleaves unto Christ through faith, God accounts him righteous because he embraces the righteousness of Christ. "Faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable ... There is no true faith, that is, justifying faith, which hath not the righteousness of Christ for its object".⁵ Man's reconciliation is accomplished through God's investing him with Christ's righteousness; he is accepted "...merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered".⁶ He is not even to regard the faith which has been so mysteriously wrought in his soul as of any worth in God's sight. Faith per se does not secure our acceptance.

1. Notes Rom. 4:9.

2. Vide supra pp. 63-5.

3. Vide Works v, 236-37 "The Lord Our Righteousness", and supra pp. 64-5.

4. Vide Letters iii, 371-72, Oct. 15, 1756.

5. Works v, 237 "The Lord Our Righteousness".

6. Ibid. v, 241 "The Lord Our Righteousness"

"The righteousness of Christ is the whole and sole foundation of all our hope. It is by faith that the Holy Ghost enables us to build upon this foundation. God gives this faith; in that moment we are accepted of God; and yet, not for the sake of that faith, but of what Christ has done and suffered for us. You see, each of these has its proper place, and neither clashes with the other....

Ourselves we forsake,
And refuge in Jesus' righteousness take,
His passion alone,
The foundation we own;
And pardon we claim,¹
And eternal redemption in Jesus' name".

This doctrine is important in Wesley's soteriology. It represents another expression of his underlying conviction that divine love manifest in Christ is alone the source of salvation. He writes that the "article" of the righteousness of Christ is a truth "... which enters deep into the nature of Christianity, and, in a manner, supports the whole frame of it".² For this reason, we recall, he assigns to it a place whose importance is conveyed in Luther's words: Articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae.³

ii

Justification as Forgiveness

The second aspect of justification, forgiveness, follows immediately upon the first. To Wesley, forgiveness is really the

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1. Works v, 242 "The Lord Our Righteousness". The verse quoted by Wesley is from his brother's hymn, "Come Let Us Arise" (1749). Vide also ibid. viii, 362-63 "The Principles Of A Methodist", Notes Rom. 4:9.
 2. Ibid. v, 235 "The Lord Our Righteousness".
 3. Vide ibid. v, 235 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. x, 390-91 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review", ibid. x, 432-33 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled".

heart of justification. It is true that the juridical aspect manifest in the doctrine of imputed righteousness figures prominently in his writings. Yet, whenever he writes of justification as forgiveness his words are stamped with an earnestness which his theological speculations sometimes lack, but which always characterizes him when he is speaking from experience. For this reason he defines justification in terms of "the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul". He writes:

"The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby ... he 'showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past'. Man's "... sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been". ¹

Moreover, to Wesley forgiveness is essentially an experience of God's love. It is true that this is a holy love which acknowledges as real the offence sin gives to it. Even in forgiveness, God's justice is operative. Wesley's comment on I John 1:9 reveals this:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins'... 'just' -- Surely then He will punish: no; for this very reason He will pardon. This may seem strange; but upon the evangelical principle of the atonement and redemption it is undoubtedly true; because, when the debt is paid ... it is the part of equity to cancel the bond, and consign over the purchased possession". ²

Yet, the profoundest meaning of justification lies in the love with which God quietly, tenderly speaks forgiveness to the sinner and lifts him from servitude into sonship, from bondage to adoption.

1. Works v, 57 "Justification By Faith". Vide also *ibid.* v, 85 "The Way To The Kingdom", *ibid.* v, 10f. "Salvation By Faith", *ibid.* v, 452 "The Law Established Through Faith", *ibid.* vi, 44-5 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", *ibid.* viii, 46f. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", *ibid.* x, 317 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification", Notes Acts 13:39.

2. Notes.

Justification is not only an act in which divine wrath is averted.

It is supremely an experience in which divine love is enjoyed.

"Pardoning love" is at "the root of all".

"How came you then to love him at first? Was it not because you knew that he first loved you? Did you, could you, love God at all, till you tasted and saw that God was gracious; that he was merciful to you a sinner?... whatever expressions any sinner who loves God uses, to denote God's love to him, you will always on examination find, that they directly or indirectly imply forgiveness. Pardoning love is still at the root of all".¹

iii

Justification as Release From Condemnation

Pardon has as its accompaniment a kindred act in which God absolves the sinner from all condemnation and frees him from the threat of punishment. Once sin has been removed or dealt with in such a way that it no longer offends God's wrath, its penal consequences are averted. "In whatsoever moment we believe, all our past sins vanish away: They are as though they had never been, and we stand clear in the sight of God".² Wesley summarizes this aspect of justification by saying that man is restored to the favour of God, as in regeneration and sanctification he is renewed in the image of God;³ that he is delivered from the guilt of sin, as in regeneration (and sanctification) he is delivered from its power and in perfection from its reality.⁴ For "guilt cannot⁵

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1. Works viii, 24 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Ibid. viii, 289 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 3. Vide ibid. vi, 71 "The New Birth", ibid. vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".
 4. Vide Notes Matt. 11:28.
 5. Vide infra pp. 272 f., 281 f.

consist with justification; they are directly opposite to each other".¹

"This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: A salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word justification; which ... implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him..."²

Finally, it is necessary to add that the experience of justification is wrought entirely by the Spirit which communicates God's saving grace. This stamps justification as a supernatural work, accompanied by ^{the} mystery that always characterizes the "deep things of God".³ Furthermore, justification is climaxed by the gift of the Spirit in all its fulness. No longer is its activity hampered by sin. The believer's consciousness of the abiding presence of the Spirit issues in the experience of adoption with which we shall deal presently.

IV

The Significance of the Doctrine of Regeneration

The doctrine of justification clearly reveals Wesley's debt to Reformed theology. It stamps his thought as Protestant and evangelical. Wesley consciously acknowledged this, and conceived this doctrine to be the main point on which Roman Catholicism and Protestantism clash. He writes that justification by faith alone is the strongest check to "... the most destructive of all those errors which Rome, the mother of abominations, has brought

1. Letters viii, 272, Mar. 20, 1762.

2. Works v, 11-12 "Salvation By Faith".

3. Ibid. v, 124 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

forth...¹ 'That we are justified by works'. Hence Wesley felt himself to be in agreement with Luther and Calvin on² "the fundamental doctrine of all Reformed Churches; viz., justification by faith alone". Other Reformed elements in his theology contributed to this. One can hardly believe as vigorously³ in⁴ the depravity of man, in the power of grace, and in the merits of Christ as alone the cause of salvation,⁵ without subscribing to a doctrine of justification also Calvinist. Wesley frequently acknowledges his sympathy with Calvin⁶ and Luther⁷ on this point.

1. Journal ii, 262, Aug. 27, 1739. Wesley also writes: "... never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and this alone can keep it out... For this reason the adversary so rages whenever 'salvation by faith' is declared to the world: For this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason ... did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright Martin Luther from reviving it". Works v, 15-6 "Salvation By Faith".
2. Works vii, 454 "True Christianity Defended", Vide also Letters iii, 291, June 8, 1750.
3. Vide Works, x 359 "What Is An Arminian?".
4. Vide supra pp 86 ff.
5. Vide Works v, 240 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. viii, 285, 336 "Minutes Of Several Conversations".
6. Vide ibid. viii, 285 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 259 "What Is An Arminian?", Letters iii, 246, Jan. 6, 1758.
7. Vide Works vii, 204 "On God's Vineyard". It is interesting to note Wesley's sympathy with certain doctrines of George Whitefield who was a professed Calvinist. Wesley writes that he believes exactly as his friend on the "fundamental point". "There is no power (by nature) and no merit in man". "Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man; and, in the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible". Wesley summarizes the main doctrines of Whitefield to which he subscribes, as justification and regeneration. Works vi, 178-79 "On The Death Of The Rev. George Whitefield", Vide also Letters v, 224-25, Feb. 26, 1771.

It is especially significant that although in his later years he came to admit that he had "leaned too far toward Calvinism"¹ in some respects, in 1765 and 1772 he explicitly states that he still thinks "just as Mr. Calvin does",² on the doctrine of justification. His affinity with Reformed theology is particularly apparent in the doctrine of imputed righteousness. In writing of this doctrine he quotes directly from Calvin's Institutes to make clear his position, and insists that he - no less than St. Paul, Luther and Calvin - desires that one trust solely in the investiture of the sinner with Christ's righteousness as the cause of man's acceptance with God.³

This fidelity to Luther and Calvin, however, inevitably brought with it the danger that frequently accompanies preaching justification by faith alone, the danger of Antinomianism. Wesley saw this very early. In 1741 he severely strictured Luther for speaking so blasphemously of good works and the moral law.⁴ His most illuminating comment, however, is the statement that no one has written more ably than Luther of the doctrine of justification, but no one has been more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification.⁵ (We also recall his attack on Calvinist predestination because it issues in Antinomianism).⁶ The Reformation truth that

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1. Vide Works viii, 278 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. viii, 336 "Minutes Of Several Conversations", ibid. x, 403 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 2. Letters iv, 298, May 14, 1765. Vide also Works x, 391 "Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review (1772)".
 3. Vide Works v, 240-41 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. x, 339 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification".
 4. Vide Journal ii, 467, June 15, 1741.
 5. Vide Works vii, 204 "On God's Vineyard".
 6. Vide supra pp. 93-95.

man is initially accepted through faith alone was perfectly congenial to Wesley, but he perceived that it must be complemented by another truth, that without inherent holiness man can not dwell with God. Despite this insight, his theology was similarly vulnerable, particularly at the point of imputed righteousness. He writes: "The nice, metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness (if it is not carefully guarded) leads not to repentance,¹ but to licentiousness. I have known a thousand instances of this". The belief that only through being invested with Christ's righteousness could a sinner become acceptable to God, was seized as a cloak for the absence of inherent righteousness. In short, the opportunity for Antinomianism latent in the doctrine of justification as conceived by St. Paul, or by Luther or Calvin, also became a danger for Wesley.²

The essence of Antinomian misconstruction of the doctrine of

1. Works x, 429 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double Distilled".
2. Wesley's awareness of this peril is illustrated in his change of mind with regard to the phrase, "the righteousness of Christ". For many years he did not scruple to say outright that a believer is clothed and invested with the righteousness of Christ. But when he perceived that an indiscriminate use of the phrase caused "unwary hearers to slide into Antinomianism", he became more "sparing" in his use of it, and suggested that it would be best never to use "the righteousness of Christ" without "the atonement of Christ". He also noted that the phrase is definitely unscriptural although one does find that "faith is imputed for righteousness". Finally, observing that the abuse still remained, he resolved in 1772 "... to lay aside that ambiguous, unscriptural phrase, which is so liable to be misinterpreted ..." (Works x, 388 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".) Vide also ibid. v, 241, 243-45 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. v, 387-88 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix", ibid. vii, 313-14 "On The Wedding Garment", ibid. viii, 277-78 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 312ff. "Thoughts Upon The Imputed Righteousness Of Christ", ibid. x, 426-30 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled", Letters iii, 381ff., Oct. 15, 1756, ibid. v, 5, Feb. 28, 1766, Notes Rom. 1:17.

justification lay in the assertion, first, that inasmuch as Christ's righteousness is imputed through faith as the only way of acceptance, man needs none of his own; secondly, that a believer is always righteous in Christ, he is never righteous in himself; thirdly, that a believer is made as holy at the time of justification as he will ever be; he does not increase in inherent holiness from the time he is justified.¹

Against this position Wesley opposed the belief that only through inherent holiness can man ultimately be saved. He wrote of Antinomian doctrine: "Here is wisdom ... from beneath! Here is the masterpiece of Satan: Farther than this he cannot go".² It is impossible to treat in detail Wesley's attacks on Antinomianism. What concerns us here is the manner in which he positively sought to avoid the peril it offered. This is seen in the doctrine of regeneration to which we now turn. It is to be understood, however, that Wesley's doctrine of regeneration (and sanctification) was not devised merely to forestall Antinomianism. It is essentially the expression of an affirmation, not a negative reaction. However, we choose to approach the doctrine of regeneration by using Wesley's attitude toward Antinomianism to illustrate his fundamental concern for holiness.

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1. Vide Works v,168 "The Repentance of Believers", ibid. v,447ff. "The Law Established Through Faith", ibid. viii,278 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x,266ff. "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend", ibid. x,276ff. "A Second Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend", ibid. x,316ff. "Preface To A Treatise On Justification", ibid. x,364-69 "A Blow At The Root", Letters iv,214, Mar. 16, 1763, Journal iii,237-38, Mar. 23, 1746.
2. Works x,367 "A Blow At The Root".

The Nature of Regeneration

The doctrine of regeneration is of crucial importance in Wesley's mind. He speaks of it as "absolutely necessary"¹ to salvation. The distinctive features of regeneration are the extinction of sin's power and renewal in righteousness. In view of the former, Wesley writes that the "foundation" of the new birth is original sin;² and regeneration itself is defined as Θεραπεία ψυχῆς³, a cleansing of the soul from the infection of sin. Like justification, it is wrought solely through faith, a faith which (together with repentance) renounces all trust in one's personal righteousness and relies only on "...Him, who 'for us paid our ransom by his death, and fulfilled the law in his life', ... 'a true confidence of the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ'".⁴ In essence this faith is the same as that which apprehends justifying grace.

In regeneration, however, grace is distinctively the Holy Spirit, which is fully bestowed in justification and whose most important function is the transformation of man's inherently sinful nature into righteousness. Through the supernatural introduction of this vitalizing and renewing Spirit, man is born again. The righteousness forensically imputed in justification is intrinsically realized in regeneration.⁵ Nothing less

1. Works vi, 73 "The New Birth".

2. Vide Ibid. vi, 68 "The New Birth", ibid. ix, 311 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

3. Ibid. ix, 194, "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

4. Ibid. v, 214 "The Marks Of The New Birth". Vide also ibid. vii, 352 "On Living Without God".

5. Vide ibid. v, 241 "The Lord Our Righteousness", Letters iii, 284, Oct. 15, 1756.

than a power utterly distinct from and greater than man is able to accomplish this work. Nothing less than a supernatural agency "... can raise those that are dead, spiritually dead in sin".¹ "None less than the Almighty".¹ "Only the Power that makes a world can make a Christian".² Thus it must be clearly understood that the new birth is "... not a natural, but a supernatural change".³ Wesley writes: "We do believe regeneration (or, in plain English, ~~A~~the new birth) to be as miraculous or super-natural a work now as it was seventeen hundred years ago".⁴

The supernatural activity of the Spirit suggests a further feature of the new birth whose importance in Wesley's mind is great enough to claim our attention for a moment. It is, the experiential character of the "vast inward change". It is true that justification is hardly less an experience of forgiveness. Yet, in regeneration God deals with man in a singularly intimate manner. Except for the direct witness of the Spirit and the further cleansing of the soul in Christian perfection, (which are dealt with in the following chapters,) regeneration least involves man's activity. It is entirely the work of God. Its experiential character is of course rooted in Wesley's doctrine of the Spirit as the source of religion as experience. The Spirit is God's nature made immanent. Hence the new birth is a direct communication of divine holiness to man. It is a felt

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1. Works vi, 178 "On The Death Of The Rev. George Whitefield".
 2. Notes II Cor. 5:17.
 3. Works ix, 310 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin". Vide also ibid. v, 224, "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God", ibid. vi, 69-71 "The New Birth".
 4. Letters iv, 332, Nov. 17, 1759.

divinization of man's being. It is for this the penitent sinner prays to Christ:

Heavenly Adam, life divine,
Change my nature into thine;
Move and spread throughout my soul,
Actuate and fill the whole.¹

For this reason Wesley insists on the new birth as the distinguish-
ing mark of a Christian.² It is " ... the only possible entrance
into the experimental knowledge of that religion, which is"
founded " ... on the inmost nature of things, the nature of God
and man, and the immutable relations between them".³ We shall
later find Wesley appealing to man's inward experience of the
new birth as a test of the genuineness of salvation.

To describe the nature of this experience we cite at length
the account which Wesley himself gives when asked to define the
nature of the new birth.

"... the nature of the new birth. It is that great
change which God works in the soul when he brings
it into life; when he raises it from^{the} death of sin
to the life of righteousness. It is the change
wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit
of God when it is 'created anew in Christ Jesus';
when it is 'renewed after the image of God, in
righteousness and true holiness'; when the love
of the world is changed into the love of God;
pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred,
envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterest-
ed love for all mankind. In a word, it is that
change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind

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1. Quoted by Wesley in Works xi, 370 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide ibid. vii, 353 "On Living Without God", ibid. vi, 72 "The New Birth".
 3. Letters ii, 38, July, 1745.

is turned into the 'mind which was in Christ Jesus'. This is the nature of the new birth: 'So is every one that is born of the Spirit'.¹

Despite the extent and experiential character of the new birth, however, it is not to be understood that the menacing reality of sin is no more. Although man is delivered from its power so that he does not commit outward acts of sin, the inbred corruption of nature persists. This point is the ground of the doctrine of sanctification. We shall accordingly deal with it at greater length in chapter six.²

1. Works vi, 71 "The New Birth". Vide also ibid. vi, 179 "On The Death Of The Rev. Mr. George Whitefield", ibid. vi, 488 "On Patience", ibid. vii, 205 "On God's Vineyard", ibid. vii, 351-52 "On Living Without God", Journal ii, 275-76, Sept. 13, 1739, Letters iv, 382-83, Nov. 26, 1762. Wesley is also fond of using the analogy of physical birth to describe the experience of spiritual birth. The natural man, as the unborn child, is dependent for the life he enjoys on the sustaining grace of God; yet his senses do not apprehend the environment in which he has his being. He has no inward consciousness of the divine presence in which he lives, nor does he perceive the breath of life that is already dormant within him. He sees not the things of God, he hears not the voice of God; he has no knowledge of nor intercourse with the invisible world even though it encompass him all about. But once he has been delivered from this state, perhaps with difficulty and pain, the breath of God is inspired into his soul and returns again to Him that gave it; and still again it is received back by faith and returned in love and praise and prayer. With eyes of enlightened understanding and faith the spiritual man now beholds the invisible world and knows that its Creator is also merciful to save. His ears are opened to hear the voice of Him who is the resurrection and the life. Above all, he feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart. In short, where before the believer had been insensible in his state of sin and death, he is a new creature, reborn, in full possession of all his faculties whose sole purpose is to love God and enjoy Him forever. Vide Works v, 224ff. "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God", ibid. vi, 69ff. "The New Birth", ibid. vii, 349ff. "On Living Without God", Notes I Thess 5:16.
2. Vide infra pp. 222ff.

The Relation of Baptism to Regeneration

A last question awaits us, the relation of baptism and regeneration. It is apparent that Wesley altered his views on this subject. In his early years he inclined to the high-church opinion that one is actually reborn of the Spirit at the same time one is born of water. For example, he writes of his own baptism: "I believe till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that 'washing of the Holy Ghost' which was given me in baptism ..."¹ This point of view, however, was modified in the course of his ministry when he found that people simply weren't always changed from sinfulness to righteousness when they were merely baptized with water. As early as 1739 such experience as that recorded in the following quotation from his Journal was moulding his doctrine.

"Of the adults I have known baptized lately, one only was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word; that is, found a thorough, inward change, by the love of God filling her heart. Most of them were only born again in a lower sense; that is, received the remission of their sins. And some (as it has since too plainly appeared) neither in one sense or the other".²

For some years, however, he seems to have believed that regeneration is "ordinarily annexed"³ to baptism, and until quite late in his ministry he assents to the Anglican doctrine that "... all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again ...". Though he adds significantly that this does not prevail with those "of riper years". "There may sometimes be the outward sign, where⁴ there is not the inward grace".

1. Journal i, 465, May, 24, 1738.

2. Ibid. ii, 135, Jan. 25, 1739. L. Tyerman sees in this a confusion (typical of Wesley's early thought) of justification and regeneration. (Vide The Life and Times of John Wesley vol. i, 229-30). Wesley always believed, however, that baptism could be a means of forgiveness (Vide Notes Acts. 22:16), though he did come to distinguish more clearly between justification and regeneration.

3. Works v, 212 "The New Birth".

4. Ibid. vi, 74 "The New Birth".

This latter observation indicates his mature position, in which there figure three main elements in the doctrine of baptism and regeneration. First, baptism and the new birth are not one and the same thing. In defence of this position he cites the Westminster (Larger) Catechism, and the Catechism of the Anglican Church.¹ Baptism with water is but "the outward sign and means"² of an inward work. These can, but do not always go together. In his mature thought Wesley cannot be said to subscribe to an arbitrary doctrine of baptismal regeneration.³ Those whose lives

1. Vide Works vi, 73 "The New Birth".

2. Notes John 3:5.

3. This statement must be qualified in one respect. There is one body of evidence in Wesley's mature thought to support a doctrine of baptismal regeneration. It is found in the "Treatise On Baptism", 1756, Works x, 191-92. The important sentences are as follows. "By Baptism, we who were 'by nature children of wrath' are made children of God. And this regeneration our Church in so many places ascribes to baptism is more than barely being admitted into the Church ... 'We are made the children of God by adoption and grace' ... or born again ... Herein a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long-continued wickedness". One hardly knows what construction to place on these sentences, as they can be opposed by equally definite statements to the contrary taken elsewhere from Wesley's writings. More than one student has avoided this complication. The difficulty is partly solved by understanding that this Treatise was not written by Wesley himself. It is an abridgment (issued in 1756) of his father's work, The Short Discourse of Baptism, originally published in 1700. Accordingly, it is hardly as reliable an account of Wesley's personal views as his explicit sermons on the subject. Possibly his mind was not definitely made up on the point ca. 1756, and he did not hesitate to let contradictory opinions remain in print. His final position, however, is suggested by his procedure in drawing up the Sunday Service for Methodists in 1784. E. Sugden has pointed out that here the office for baptism is abridged in such a way that specific references to regeneration contained in the Anglican office are omitted; the word "regenerated" is used only in a scriptural connotation (John 3:5) in the preliminary exhortation; and in the thanksgiving at the end of the service no mention is made that the baptized child, though adopted and admitted into the church, is reborn. Vide The Standard Sermons of John Wesley i, 281.

fail to reveal the effects of the inward work cannot trust in the ceremony of baptism for salvation. By their sins they have denied their baptism. Wesley writes of such a baptized but palpable sinner:

"What, if he was then a child of God? He is now manifestly a child of the devil; for the works of his father he doeth . . . He must go through an entire change of heart".¹ "How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whore-mongers, thieves, extortioners? . . . Unto you I call . . . 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell'? "Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism".²

Secondly, as one notes from the preceding quotation, Wesley's emphasis is entirely on the reality of the inward change in man's soul, which can take place with or without the sacrament of baptism. It is to be understood, however, that the experience of salvation (justification and regeneration) can (and sometimes does) occur at the time of baptism. (He writes in his Notes on Acts 22:16, for example, that baptism can be both a "means and seal" of "pardon". Similarly, baptism is defined as a "channel" through which God conveys "preventing, justifying and sanctifying grace".)³ Nevertheless, whether or not the sacrament is present, man must

1. Works viii, 48 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

2. Ibid. v, 221-22 "The Marks Of The New Birth". Vide also ibid. vi, 75-6 "The New Birth".

3. Ibid. v, 187 "The Means Of Grace". Italics mine.

inwardly be born of the Spirit.¹ Third, the test of the genuineness of regeneration is ethical, no matter whether or not it take place at the time of baptism. The end of all is "holiness". The "marks of the new birth" are faith and hope that issue in love of God and man.³ We shall deal with this point in sanctification.

V

Adoption

Justification and regeneration issue in the experience of adoption, in which the sinner's consciousness of forgiveness and of rebirth in righteousness, is sealed by the presence of the Spirit

1. It is difficult to know whether or not many of Wesley's converts found salvation while being baptized or while partaking of holy communion. It is probable, however, that most of them did not. The general impression one receives from the Journals is that generally people were converted while Wesley was preaching or immediately after, or while praying with him or his helpers, or while alone. It is important in this connection to recall that the majority of Wesley's preachers were commissioned to preach, not to administer the sacraments. Wesley makes this point unmistakably clear in his sermon on "The Ministerial Office", Works vii, 273ff. He distinguishes between the priestly and prophetic offices of the ministry; and emphatically asserts that Methodist preachers (except those regularly ordained in the Anglican Church) exercise only the latter. From this one concludes that at least the majority of the people converted under the ministry of Wesley's clergymen, were probably not converted while attending on the sacraments. Hence justifying and regenerating grace is by no means limited to the sacraments. The significance of this evidence would hardly be lost on Wesley. It probably shaped his doctrine in the manner suggested above, i.e. that regeneration (salvation) does not always accompany baptism.
2. Vide Works vi, 71 "The New Birth".
3. Vide Ibid. v, 212ff. "The Marks Of The New Birth".

in his heart which constrains him to cry out, "Abba, Father".¹

That he can thus address God Who but a short time before appeared unto him as a harsh and vengeful Judge, betokens the reconciliation that has been effected through the merits of his Saviour's death, a reconciliation that has granted to a servant the filial privileges of a beloved son. Wherein before the Holy Spirit had been a means of bringing man under bondage to the law in order to convince of sin, it is now a gracious witness of release from condemnation² and an assurance of welcome from the heavenly Father³. Thus justification implies a new existent relation of sonship as well as a formal declaration of forgiveness. For this reason Wesley insists that the Greek terms important for justification, δικαιολογία, καθίστασθαι, mean not only acquittal before the justice³ of God but entry into a new and acceptable relation with Him. "In the very same moment that God forgives, we are the sons of God... For pardon and acceptance, though they may be distinguished, cannot be divided".⁴ Moreover, because adoption also follows upon regeneration, it signifies that the believer has been not only formally deemed righteous but actually made into a child of God. His renewal in holiness is authenticated by the consciousness of sonship. Because a believer becomes a son, an heir of God, he likewise becomes a joint-heir with Christ; and the Spirit constitutes a pledge that

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1. Vide Works v, 217 "The Marks Of The New Birth". Adoption is intimately related with the witness of the Spirit, which we shall treat at greater length in the next chapter.
 2. Ibid. v, 106-07 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption", Notes Rom. 8:15; Jude 1:1.
 3. Ibid. ix, 253-54 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Ibid. x, 323-34 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification".

he shall enter into the inheritance of the Father and the Son.¹

One may say of the salvation offered in Christianity: "It finishes all, by restoring the due relations between God and man; by uniting forever the tender Father, and the grateful, obedient son; the great Lord of all, and the faithful servant; doing not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him".²

We remark concerning Wesley's doctrine of adoption, first, that the Holy Spirit is again significantly the means of grace by which the believer comes to know God as a Father. This stamps adoption as essentially an experience, with which we shall deal at greater length in the doctrine of the assuring witness of the Spirit in the next chapter. Secondly, it is in keeping with Wesley's intuition of the meaning of Christian salvation as an experience of "pardoning love", that he conceives acceptance by God to issue in the tenderness of the relation of sonship. That the result of justification is more than mere acquittal, is consistent with his conception of justification itself as more than a conciliation of divine justice or an imputation of righteousness, that it is essentially pardon. Wesley's assertion that man is not saved "...unless the Spirit of adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry 'Abba, Father!'",³ is but another evidence that "pardoning love is at the root of all".

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1. Wesley quotes Bishop Pearson's An Exposition Of The Creed on the office of the Spirit, Article viii,² to make clear this point. Vide Letters iv, 377-78, Nov. 26, 1762.
 2. Works viii, 12 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Ibid. v, 110 "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption".

VI

The Blessedness of Those Who are Justified

The moment a believer is justified and regenerated he has passed through the gate of religion and has become sanctified in some degree.¹ When this has happened, he experiences the blessedness that attends one who feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart, who possesses the mind that was in Christ and who is led by the Spirit. The measure of his happiness indeed depends on the extent to which he offers up himself to further ministrations of sanctifying grace. Yet, because of his reconciliation the justified man knows at least in part the blessedness of the redeemed. The image of God is stamped on his heart; the native appetite for righteousness of a "heaven-born" spirit returns.² The believer is able to testify, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me".³ Because of the possession of this faith he is no longer secured to things present and visible, but finds himself dwelling in eternity,⁴ in the presence of the invisible and deep things of God. He judges all the offerings of this world in terms of their relevance to his eternal destiny, and of their value for contributing to his fellowship with God. He finds heaven already present to him for the Holy Spirit has taken up its abode in his heart, and has

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1. Vide Works vii, 205 "On God's Vineyard", Letters v, 175, Jan 2, 1770.
 2. Vide Letters ii, 293, 1848, Works vi, 45 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vii, 205-06 "On God's Vineyard".
 3. Gal. 2:20. Vide Works v, 39 "Scriptural Christianity".
 4. Vide Works vi, 430 "Spiritual Worship", ibid. vii, 256ff. "On The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith", ibid. xi, 371 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Notes I John, 3:15.

welcomed him into the kingdom of the sons of God.

The fruits of the Spirit become his possession, the inward peace that passeth all understanding, that keeps the souls of all believers, "... not only their hearts, all their passions and affections, but also their minds, all the motions of their understanding and imagination, and all the workings of their reason, in Christ Jesus".¹ "This peace will increase as " one's "faith increases; one always keeps pace with the other".² "And without this it is scarce possible to 'grow in grace'... For all fear (unless the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul".³ Such peace is alone the work of the Spirit, "a supernatural sensation", "a divine taste".⁴

Because the believer knows he is accepted by God, because the Spirit has conferred on him a foretaste of the bliss to which he is going, he has every hope of a continuous and increasing fellowship with God and of someday enjoying God in glory. Throughout the moral struggles he is called upon to undergo, the "living hope"⁵ of Christianity preserves him "... from striking upon either of those fatal rocks, - presumption ~~or~~ despair ... He neither apprehends the difficulties of the race set before him to be greater than he has strength to conquer, nor expects them to

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1. Works vii, 433 "On The Death Of Mr. Fletcher". Vide also ibid. v, 39 "Scriptural Christianity", ibid. v, 385f. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix", ibid. viii, 10 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Letters v, 283, Oct. 16, 1771.
 3. Works vi, 36 "Satan's Devices".
 4. Ibid. v, 80 "The Way To The Kingdom".
 5. Ibid. v, 216 "The Marks Of The New Birth".

be so little as to yield in the conquest, till he has put forth all his strength".¹ Above all, the believer experiences the exultant joy that attends one who has been welcomed home by the heavenly Father. He rejoices when he looks back on the sin from which he has been redeemed; "he cannot but rejoice, whensoever he looks on the state wherein he now is"; "he rejoiceth also, whenever he looks forward 'in hope of the glory that shall be revealed'".² For, "it is the very design of the gospel that, being saved from guilt, we should be happy in the love of Christ".³ This joy, like hope and peace, is a "precious means" of promoting all holiness. "It is peculiarly designed of God to be a balance both against all inward and outward sufferings ... Consequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionately obstructs our holiness".⁴

It is significant that Wesley interprets the fruits of the Spirit, peace, hope and joy, as means of furthering holiness. He is laying his finger here on a psychological truth. The presence of peace, hope and joy, signifies a unified soul, free from a sense of condemnation. Christian salvation preserves the soul from unhealthy effects of the moral struggle. It is true that the disparity between God's claim of perfection and remaining sin induces a certain tension within the soul, a tension necessary for moral growth. But man brings to this growth a dedicated and unified spirit, confirmed in peace, inspired by hope and made eager by divine joy.

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1. Works v, 206 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 2. Ibid. viii, 342 "The Character Of A Methodist". Vide also ibid. v, 218 "The Marks Of The New Birth", ibid. viii, 297-98 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 295 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 3. Notes I Thess. 5:16.
 4. Works vi, 35-6 "Satan's Devices".

VII

The Circumstances of Justification

It remains for us to inquire into the manner in which the experience of justification, regeneration and adoption takes place, ^{and into} its relation to the subsequent growth in holiness in sanctification. Is justification gradual or instantaneous? Is the renewal in holiness in regeneration progressively or suddenly achieved?

It must first be understood that Wesley did not insist upon an acceptance of what he personally believed to be the circumstances of justification. He was most concerned for the experience itself, and not for a blanket rule by which it must happen. He writes, "... I contend not for a circumstance, but the substance...¹ Only see that you do attain it". He likewise acknowledges the varieties of conversion phenomena, and writes that "there is an irreconcilable¹ variation in the operation of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, more especially in the manner of justification".²

Such tolerance as this always characterized him. Yet he did come to a definite conclusion about the nature of justification, a conclusion that was the product of searching the scriptures, of logic, ^{of} and/his wide experience in personally bringing men to salvation. Wesley conceived justification (and regeneration and adoption) as an instantaneous work, preceded and followed by a gradual work of grace.³ It is gradual in that it is preceded by all the activity of preventing and convincing grace. But the actual gift of justifying faith,

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1. Works viii, 48 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Letters vii, 298, Oct. 30th, 1785. Vide also ibid. iv, 308, July 5, 1765, ibid. v, 175, Jan. 15, 1770, ibid. v, 255, May, 31, 1771, ibid. viii, 110, Jan, 9, 1789.
 3. Vide ibid. vii, 222, June 21, 1784, Works vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation".

of forgiveness, renewal and adoption, is usually "wrought in one moment,¹ 'as the lightning shining from heaven'". The moment a man believes he is saved. The broodings of conscience and the misery of bondage to the law have made of his soul a quivering and sensitive thing, capable of immediate response to the importunate grace of God; and when in His wisdom God chooses to exercise His love in the gift of faith and forgiveness, the soul can not but leap like a freed thing to take the outstretched gift.

The manner in which Wesley was governed by scripture and experience in the formulation of his final conclusion regarding the nature of justification, is illustrated in the following quotation, which describes the abandonment of his earlier view that justification is entirely gradual.

"...it was not Peter Böhler who convinced me that conversion (I mean justification) was an instantaneous work. On the contrary, when I was convinced of the nature and fruits of justifying faith, still I could not comprehend what he spoke of ~~as~~ an instantaneous work. I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment; how a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles. But to my utter astonishment, I found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions; scarce any others so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth. I had but one retreat left, viz., 'Thus, I grant, God wrought in the first ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe he works in the same manner now?' But on Sunday, 23, I was beat out of this retreat too, by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses, who testified God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them, in a moment, such a faith in the blood of his Son, as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief!'"²

Wesley came to find in his own ministry that

1. Journal ii, 68, Preface to part III, 1738. Vide also Letters ii, 62, 1. Dec. 30, 1745. 2. Preface to part III, 1738. Vide also Journal ii, 2. Works viii, 366-67 "The Principles Of A Methodist". Vide also ibid. v, 14 "Salvation By Faith".

"... to this also agrees the experience of those who now receive the heavenly gift. Three or four exceptions only have I found in the course of several years ... all the rest of those who from time to time among us have believed in the Lord Jesus were in a moment brought from the darkness to light, and from ^{the} power of Satan unto God".¹

His use of logic is seen in the following:

"We likewise believe that the spiritual life, which commences when we are born again, must in the nature of the thing have a first moment as well as the natural. But we say again and again we are concerned for the substance of the thing, not the circumstance".²

In this way, then, justification is conceived as an instantaneous work preceded by a gradual work of grace.

It is also followed by a gradual work of grace because the holiness established in regeneration must flower into full sanctification of heart and life. Thus the new birth is but "the gate", the beginning of sanctification, as natural birth is not the whole of life but merely entrance upon it.³ Wesley writes: "When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness, begins; thenceforward we are gradually to 'grow up into Him who is our Head'".⁴ Thus the circumstances of salvation, i.e. that it is an event followed by a process, reveal the intimate connection he mainly insisted on in order to enforce the necessity of inherent holiness. He writes of "the people called Methodists":

"It is, then, a great blessing given to this people,

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1. Works viii, 25 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also ibid. viii, 48 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. viii, 289 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Letters iv, 362, Nov. 26, 1762.
 2. Letters iv, 332, Nov. 17, 1759.
 3. Vide Works vii, 205 "On God's Vineyard", ibid. viii, 291 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. ix, 310 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
 4. Ibid. vi, 74, "The New Birth".

that as they do not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other. They know God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder: Therefore, they maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other; being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee".¹

1. Works vii, 205 "On God's Vineyard".

Chapter V.

THE ASSURING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

I

Introduction.

We have chosen to interrupt temporarily the drama of salvation as carried on from justification to sanctification, in order to study at some length Wesley's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. We do so for three reasons. First, believers experience the witness of the Spirit at the time of adoption (and justification and regeneration). Secondly, the doctrine of assurance is distinctively Wesleyan, and may well deserve a chapter of its own rather than being broken up and incorporated into other doctrines of Wesley's theology. Thirdly, distinctive as this doctrine is, it signifies a deeper truth that peculiarly distinguishes Wesley's entire system of thought, namely, the experiential nature of Christian salvation.

The last point must constantly be borne in mind. Far too often the doctrine of assurance has been investigated as an object of theological curiosity, without a genuine effort to appreciate the profound truth that sustains it, i.e. that Wesley's theology is a theology of religious experience. By this we mean that Wesley believed that the truth of the Christian religion is most fully entered into and most surely authenticated through a personal experience of its reality within the human consciousness. When he speaks of the witness of the Spirit as "the great evangelical truth"¹ which the Methodists have recovered, he is acknowledging a greater truth that claimed them, - that an experience of "the life of God

1. Works v, 124 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

in the soul of man¹ is the privilege of all who seek salvation, and a test of the genuineness of salvation.

II

The Doctrine of Perceptible Inspiration

Wesley's theology of experience in general, and the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit in particular, are rooted in the doctrine of God as immanent. We recall his vigorous accent on the divine immanence in his doctrine of God. (We also recall his "grand objection" to Calvinist predestination, that it "hinders the inward work" of grace in man's soul). His conception of divine immanence is well seen in the following quotation.

"How advisable by every possible means, to connect the ideas of time and eternity...of the visible and invisible world; to connect temporal and spiritual, mortal and immortal being... What an admirable foundation for thus associating the ideas of time and eternity, of the visible and invisible world, is laid in the nature of religion! For, what is religion? -- I mean scriptural religion? What is the very root of this religion? It is Immanuel, God with us! God in man! Heaven connected with earth! The unspeakable union of mortal with immortal".²

Wesley's conception of God's immanence is most characteristically seen in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We have written of this in chapter two.³ His belief in the importance of the Spirit for salvation is reflected in his sermon on the text, "Now the Lord is that Spirit".⁴ He unites together the three members of the Trinity in order to show that "Christ is not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but cannot save: but he is

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1. This phrase is not original with Wesley. It is the title of a book published by a Scottish divine, Henry Scougall, in 1677, abridged and published by Wesley first in 1744.
 2. Works vii, 324 "Human Life A Dream".
 3. Vide supra pp 68ff.
 4. II Cor. 3:17.

Immanuel, God with us, and in us".¹ The Holy Spirit communicates to man the salvation offered by both God the Father and God the Son. Whenever God deals as Redeemer with man, He assumes the form, as it were, of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the "Christian experience"² of salvation is undertaken and wrought by the Spirit.

In keeping with his belief that the truth of the Christian religion is most fully known through a saving experience, Wesley accords a central place to the work of the Spirit. We cannot have studied his soteriology thus far without observing this. We first observed the Spirit's activity in preventing grace; then in convincing grace as it brings man under bondage to the law and convicts of sin; in working repentance and conferring faith; in witnessing God's forgiving love preliminary to justification; in mediating forgiveness; in transforming the soul in regeneration; and finally, in signifying to the believer his adoption as a son. Through all we have tried to make clear Wesley's insistence that one experience these offices of the Spirit.

His awareness of the centrality of the Spirit in salvation is conspicuously illustrated in his instant attacks on those who denied what he felt to be its legitimate^{ti} and necessary function. We have already noted his conviction that although the "extraordinary gifts", Χαρίσματα, may have ceased at the close of the first or second centuries, the "ordinary" gifts⁵ of the Spirit are still operative in Christian experience, as

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1. Works vii, 514 "On The Holy Spirit". Vide also Notes Matt.1:23.
 2. Works xiv, 261 "Preface To An Extract Of Miss Mary Gilbert's Journal".
 5. Vide supra pp. 68-70.

effectually as they were at Pentecost.¹ This awareness is further seen in his contention that Christianity is miraculous, that God has not in "...any way precluded Himself from thus exerting His sovereign power, from working miracles in any kind or degree in any age to the end of the world".² (A miracle is defined as "a deviation from the general laws of nature".)³ With much ardour Wesley undertakes to refute Conyers Middleton's assertion that in view of the scarcity and untrustworthiness of the evidence, it is hardly likely that miracles were actually performed by Christ and the apostles; and that in any case they did not extend beyond the apostolic age.⁴ Wesley here feels himself to be contesting for salient ground against the oppressive Deism of his century. In a slightly different form, his concern for the important place he feels must be given to the Holy Spirit appears in his frequent acknowledgment of the mystery of God's activity in man's soul.⁵ We have already noted this to some extent. It bears a particular relevance for our present point in that it reflects Wesley's deep feeling for the supernaturalness of the Presence that invades and claims the human soul.

We must point out, lastly, Wesley's emphasis on the perceptible nature of the Spirit, i.e. that it is a vital energy, a dynamic agency that immediately acts on the soul of man in a fashion.

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1. Vide Works viii, 107 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Letters ii, 261, June 17, 1746. Vide also pp. 256ff. of the same letter.
 3. Works vi, 321 "On Divine Providence".
 4. Vide Letters ii, 312ff., Jan. 4, 1749.
 5. Vide Works v, 117, 121-22, 124 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. viii, 49 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters iv, 318, July 5, 1765, ibid. iv, 332, Nov. 17, 1759, ibid. v, 175, Jan. 15, 1770, ibid. v, 255, May 31, 1771, ibid. vii, 298, Oct. 30, 1785, ibid. viii, 110, Jan. 9, 1789.

analogous to the action of matter on matter, ~~and~~ without whose concurrence the meanest of our faculties cannot be exerted.

It becomes clear, therefore, how vital he conceived the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be his theology. Despite the charges of "enthusiasm", heresy, and popery, which on occasion were levelled at him, Wesley firmly insisted it was indeed a great blessing on "the people called Methodists", that they confidently believed in the New Testament promises of the work and witness of the Spirit; and had come to know that God does cleanse the thoughts of the heart by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that men may perfectly love Him and worthily magnify His holy
1
name.

It is not enough, however, for Wesley to affirm that the Spirit inspires its presence into the human soul. He must further conceive the human soul so constituted that it can reliably experience the inspiration of the Spirit. This is cared for by a view of the inward consciousness of man as valid for apprehending the activity of God.

"God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular, we are capable of perceiving what passes in our hearts or lives; of knowing whatsoever we feel or do; and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say, man...has a consciousness, or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself..." 2

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1. Wesley is fond of quoting this historic prayer, as well as many of the Articles and Homilies of the Anglican Church, in defence of his conception of the important place the Spirit should hold in Christian living. Vide Works viii, 102ff. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters iv, 378ff., Nov. 26, 1762.
 2. Works v, 135 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

It is to this introspective consciousness that Wesley appeals for the reality of the witness of salvation. Sometimes he speaks of it as a "spiritual sense"¹ (which apparently is not to be identified with faith as a spiritual sense). He also speaks of it as "feeling", which he defines as "being inwardly conscious of"². He does not scruple to write that feeling is "the most infallible of all proofs"³.

Wesley's conception of the Holy Spirit as a divine energy conveying the life of God to men, and his belief that man can consciously know its ministry, issue in what may be called a doctrine of "perceptible inspiration" (or "immediate inspiration"⁴). This doctrine affirms that the nature of God can be experienced by man; that the final reality of the universe (as conceived in Christian revelation) is supernaturally introduced into man's being through the Spirit, whose presence can be perceived, and whose fruits can be clearly discerned. The presence of the Spirit in man is identified with objective reality; when man feels this presence he is in communion with that reality. The Christian knowledge of God is real when it is experienced; a Christian is one who perceptibly feels the presence of God. Wesley borders on mysticism in defining the nature of this doctrine. He writes

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1. Vide Works v, 121, 122 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. xiv, 208 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern", Letters ii, 382ff., Jan. 4, 1749.
 2. Works viii, 78 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion". Vide also Letters v, 364, Mar. 28, 1768.
 3. Letters i, 263, Oct. 30, 1738. Vide also ibid. ii, 206, Feb. 2, 1745, Journal i, 415, Jan. 8, 1738.
 4. The phrase "perceptible inspiration" is not original with Wesley, although he grants with alacrity that it denotes what he means. It was pinned on him by a correspondent, probably Bishop Secker of Oxford, who exchanged letters with Wesley under the nom de plume of "John Smith". The phrase "immediate inspiration" appears to be original with Wesley. Vide Letters ii, 62, Dec. 30, 1745, Works viii, 107 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

in a preface to an edition of Thomas a Kempis' Imitatio Christi:

The "great" "...truths of religion, the mysteries of the inward kingdom of God, cannot be fully discerned, but by those who have read" these "things in their own souls... who derive their knowledge" of God "not from commentaries, but experience;" who have "... that inward, practical, experimental, feeling knowledge"; whose minds have come "... to be immersed, if one may so speak, in the spirituality of the inward sense ... to converse with the very soul of all ..." truth. ¹

Time after time Wesley urges his readers to strive after an "experimental knowledge and love of God", ² "an inward, experimental knowledge of Christ", ³ to become "experimentally acquainted with true religion". ⁴ In short, the doctrine of perceptible inspiration is the formal embodiment of Wesley's conviction that God can and does inspire His presence into the soul of man in such a way, that man consciously shares in that presence through an experience of it.

For this reason Wesley conceived experience to be the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity. It is noteworthy that he acknowledges his debt to his father, who, as he lay dying, said to his son, "The inward witness, son, the inward witness, that is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity". ⁵ Wesley admits that he did not then comprehend what his father meant, but that after his own conversion he came clearly to see

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1. Works xiv, 207-08 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern".
 2. Ibid. vii, 283 "The General Spread Of The Gospel".
 3. Notes Phil. 3:8. Vide, also ibid. Eph. 4:13.
 4. Works v, 186 "The Means Of Grace". Vide also ibid. vii, 461 "True Christianity Defended", ibid. viii, 204 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Letters iii, 41, June 28, 1750, ibid. iii, 47, Nov. 27, 1750, ibid. vi, 136, Jan. 17, 1775, ibid. vii, 47, Jan. 3, 1750.
 5. Letters ii, 135, Mar. 22, 1748.

that the authentication of the truth of the gospel is mainly to
be found in a believer's own heart.¹ Such evidence Wesley speaks
of as "internal evidence", as distinguished from "traditional evid-
ence".² The former assures the believer that all that Christianity
promises is wrought in his soul.

"What Christianity (considered as a doctrine)
promised is accomplished in my own soul. And
Christianity, considered as an inward principle,
is the completion of all those promises ... And
this I conceive to be the strongest evidence of
the truth of Christianity. I do not undervalue
traditional evidence ... And yet I cannot set it
on a level with this ... no length of time can
possibly affect the strength of this internal
evidence. It is equally strong, equally new, through
the course of seventeen hundred years. It passes
now, even as it has done from the beginning, direct-
ly from God into the believing soul ... the internal
evidence is immediately present to all persons at all
times in all places. It is nigh thee, in thy mouth,
and in thy heart, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus
Christ ... 'What the Scripture promises, I enjoy. Come
and see what Christianity has done here, and acknow-
ledge it is of God'".³

Because the doctrine of perceptible inspiration embodies
Wesley's strongest conviction of the truth of Christianity, and
because it elucidates the kind of experience into which he desires
men to enter, he writes that it sums up all the distinguishing
doctrines on which he insists.

"For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are
called Methodist preachers ... This is ... the main
doctrine of the Methodists. This is the substance of
what we all preach. And I will still believe none is
a true Christian till he experiences it ... I do not,
therefore, I will not, shift the question ... I know
the proposition I have to prove, and I will **not** move
an hair's breadth from it. It is this: 'No man **can be**
a true Christian without such an inspiration of the
Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace and joy and
love, which he who perceives not has it **not**'. This is

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1. Vide Letters ii, 134-35, Mar. 22, 1748.
 2. Vide Ibid. ii, 383-84, Jan. 4, 1749.
 3. Ibid. ii, 383-87, Jan. 4, 1749.

the point for which I alone contend; and this¹
I take to be the very foundation of Christianity".

In view of such vehemence, Wesley was ruthless with those who denied the necessity of an experience of the Holy Spirit in Christian living. Often such attacks took the form (in Paul's phrase to Timothy) of a denunciation of those who have the "form" but not the "power" of godliness.² His main point, however, is a positive assertion that "... till a man 'receives the Holy Ghost', he is without God in the world; that he cannot know the things of God, unless God reveal them unto him by the Spirit; no, nor have even one holy or heavenly temper, without the inspiration of the Holy One",³ whose presence "... is essentially necessary to every Christian..."⁴ (Charles Wesley, incidentally, is even more pronounced than his brother. He labels as "anti-Christ" those who deny the necessity of the indwelling Spirit).⁵

Accordingly, as we approach a detailed study of the doctrine of assurance we must understand that it is with a profounder truth we are dealing. Assurance is but one - though admittedly the most distinctive - of the activities of the Spirit; and the doctrine that describes its peculiar function as a witness rests on Wesley's fundamental conviction, that the truth of Christianity is deepest entered into through a saving experience.

1. Letters ii, 63-4, Dec. 30, 1745.
2. II Tim. 3:5 Vide Works v, 123 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. vi, 432 "Spiritual Worship", ibid. viii, 61f. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
3. Ibid. viii, 106 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
4. Ibid. viii, 49, "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
5. Vide ibid. v, 30, 34 "Awake, Thou That sleepest".

III

What the Spirit Witnesses.

The content of the witness of the Spirit is made clear by understanding that it refers to what has taken place in man's soul at the time of justification. We recall that, broadly speaking, three things happen to the sinner. He is forgiven his sins in justification; the power of sin is extinguished in regeneration; he is reconciled to his Father as a son in adoption. Accordingly, one find Wesley saying that a redeemed sinner is made conscious of all three of these by a testimony of the Spirit. However, **he** defines assurance as essentially a consciousness of sonship. This is probably for two reasons; first, because the Bible speaks most explicitly of assurance as a consciousness of reconciliation; secondly, because acceptance as a son (in a logical sense) is the issue of forgiveness and renewal. His classic definition of assurance is as follows:

"The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God".¹

This statement implies, however, that Wesley considered a believer also to be assured of pardon and regeneration; and he **writes** expressly that "in being a child of God, the pardon of his sins is also included; therefore I believe the Spirit of

1. Works v, 115 "The Witness Of The Spirit". Vide also *ibid.* viii, 168 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", *ibid.* vi, 205-06 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", Letters ii, 90-1, Mar. 25, 1747, *ibid.* i, 200, July 10, 1747, *ibid.* iii, 161, Feb. 5, 1756. The best exposition of the nature of the witness is found in Wesley's two sermons on the witness of the Spirit, Works v, 111ff.

God will witness to this also".¹ The assurance of regeneration is implied in his statement that the "... witness of God's Spirit with ours, that we are the children of God", is "... a good proof that we are born of the Spirit".² (The assurance of the new birth is most vividly experienced in the indirect witness, of which we treat below).

It must be understood, however, that just as justification, regeneration and adoption, are simultaneous in experience though separate in logical analysis, so the assurance of the Spirit includes a sense of forgiveness, renewal and acceptance. Assurance is one experience although it can be analyzed into its different elements. Yet it can happen that the believer is assured of one of these with more vividness than another. The particular element of assurance he most vividly enjoys will in some measure depend upon the kind of religious experience he has previously had.³ To one who has suffered from a morbid sense of guilt, the assurance will be one essentially of forgiveness. To one who has been deeply impressed with his alienation from God, the assurance will be mainly of adoption. (Wesley writes, for example, that he himself lingered "for some time" after his conversion without a complete assurance of adoption, although he knew his sins to be forgiven.)⁴ To one who has profoundly felt the inherent wickedness of his nature, assurance will be a heightened consciousness of

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1. Letters i, 274-75, Nov. 30, 1738.
 2. Works viii, 66 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Vide E.H. Sugden, The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley i, 299.
 4. Vide Works viii, 372 "The Principles Of A Methodist". Vide also Letters i, 263-64, Oct. 30, 1738, ibid. i, 269, Nov. 22, 1738, Journal ii, 91, Oct. 14, 1738.

of the conquest of sin and a resurrection to righteousness. Nonetheless, it is to be understood that although the content of the witness varies in proportion and kind, every believer experiences in some degree an assurance of the forgiveness of sins, of the new birth within, and of adoption as a son of God.¹

IV

The Manner in Which the Spirit Witnesses

We next inquire into the manner in which the witness of the Spirit takes place. There are two forms of this experience: first, a direct witness of God's Spirit to a man's soul; secondly, an indirect witness, which is an ~~inference~~ made from the ethical quality of life subsequent to justification. We shall speak of these as direct and indirect.

i

The Direct Witness

The direct witness is an immediate communication of the Spirit to man's soul. Wesley observes that it is difficult to define the nature of this testimony. One can merely paraphrase the

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1. In his earlier thought Wesley emphasized the pledge of the Spirit as a security of heaven, as an assurance that the sinner has a title to eternal happiness. In like manner he believed ~~that~~ the Spirit is not fully bestowed until man has successfully suffered the misfortunes and pain that life brings, until he has put aside the infirm and corrupting flesh and yields up his chastened soul at death. In his maturest thought, however, assurance as forgiveness and sonship has practically replaced assurance as security of heaven, although in some respects (as we shall discuss presently) the latter is also implied. Vide Works vii, 492 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit", ibid.^{vii} 515f. "On The Holy Spirit".

the¹ Biblical texts that describes its nature, and write that God's Spirit mysteriously impresses upon the believing soul the assurance that it is beloved and adopted by God, which constrains the believer to cry out in recognition of Him who has wrought his salvation, "Abba, Father".² The nature of the Triune God is unveiled in all His glory:

"... God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son: And, having this witness, he honours the Son, and the blessed Spirit, 'even as he honours the Father!'.³

This type of witness is characterized, first, by its supernaturalness. It is nothing less than an invasion of the divine nature into the inmost precincts of the human soul. God wroughts this witness. Man is wholly passive, God is completely the agent, man the recipient. It is characterized, secondly, by immediacy. Nothing interposes between the soul of man and ~~the~~ invading presence of God. The reflective faculty, whose function in the indirect witness we shall consider presently, is quite absent.⁴ The texture of man's soul is directly impinged upon by the Spirit. Thirdly, Wesley appears to conceive the direct witness as appealing mainly to the psychic, intuitive nature of man. He generally uses the words "feeling" or "heart", to designate that part of man's nature to which God's spirit addresses itself. He appears never

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1. The texts on which Wesley bases this doctrine, are: Rom. 8:15-16, "... ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God:" Gal. 4:6, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father". He also cites the following: Rom. 8:14; II Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32; Heb. 8:10; I John 3:24; 4:18. Vide Works v, 113, 126-7, "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. viii, 276 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Vide Works v, 115, 125, 126-28 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 3. Ibid. vi, 205 "On The Trinity".
 4. Vide ibid. v, 127, 128 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

to use the word "mind". Yet Wesley would say that the mental realization of what is happening in the direct witness is an integral part of the experience. It does not involve a loss of self-consciousness, an absorption in God that frequently attends mystical experiences. Rather, the believer has a definite sense of self-hood, heightened by the knowledge that he, personally, a former sinner, is now accepted and beloved by God. Yet this is not to say that the experience is primarily an intellectual or rational one. It is essentially supra-rational. Hence, fourthly, the direct testimony is characterized by the mystery that accompanies the deeper working of God in the soul. But that one is unable to define precisely the manner in which the Spirit acts on the soul to produce an assurance of adoption, does not alter the fact that it does so act. Wesley frankly writes:

"The manner how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth ... the manner of the things of God knoweth no one ... But the fact we know; ^{such} namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams".¹

Elsewhere Wesley says that "neither man nor angel" can explain how God's Spirit bears witness with man's, and "to require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner ... is to make a demand which can never be answered ..."² Wesley himself, except for the "classic" definition we have quoted, almost always has to resort

1. Works v, 117 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
2. Ibid. v, 121 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

to metaphor and simile to explain how the Spirit witnesses to the
soul.¹

Yet, despite such mystery, the Spirit's assurance is real and perceptible, for "... imperceptible assurance is no assurance at all ..."² Wesley unequivocally writes:

"... it is certain, over and above those other graces which the Holy Spirit inspires into or operates in a Christian, and over and above His imperceptible influences, I do intend all mankind should understand me to assert (what I therefore express in the clearest language I am master of) every Christian hath a perceptible testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God. I use the phrase 'testimony of the Spirit' rather than 'inspiration', because it has a more determinate meaning. And I desire men to know what I mean, and what I do not; that I may not fight as one that beateth the air".³

The direct perceptible witness is conferred at the same time the believer is justified, reborn and adopted.⁴ It also bears an intimate relation to the act of faith by which a man is justified. (This relation will be treated presently). It is almost always given instantaneously, though Wesley admits that God works in some a "gradually increasing" assurance of His love.⁵ Finally, the assurance of salvation leaves abundant room for a subsequent growth in grace.⁶

ii

The Indirect Witness

The indirect witness may be equated with what Wesley calls

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1. Vide Works v, 125 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 2. Letters ii, 138, Mar. 22, 1748.
 3. Ibid. ii, 90, Mar. 25, 1747. Vide also ibid. ii, 100-01, July, 10, 1747.
 4. Vide Works viii, 276, 290 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. v, 107, "The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption", ibid. v, 39-40 "Scriptural Christianity", ibid. v, 85-6 "The Way To The Kingdom".
 5. Vide Letters ii, 46, Sept. 28, 1745.
 6. Vide ibid. iv, 170, Jan. 30, 1762.

"the witness of our own spirit". It consists in an inference man draws from the quality of his life subsequent to justification, that he is pardoned, renewed and adopted. This witness is a conclusion drawn from one's personal experience illuminated by the Bible. "The Word of God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; experience or inward consciousness, tells me, that I have the fruit of the Spirit; and hence I rationally conclude, 'Therefore I am a child of God'¹". Man simply applies the marks of the new birth to his own soul; if he finds that he possesses them he is assured of his acceptance.² (How these are applied is treated below). Elsewhere Wesley defines the indirect witness as the testimony of a "conscience void of offence toward God and toward men"³. The elements necessary to a "good conscience" are: (1) "a right understanding of the word of God": (2) "a true knowledge of ourselves"; (3) "an agreement of our hearts and lives with ... the written word of God as the rule of conduct"; (4) "an inward perception of this agreement" with the word of God as our rule of conduct. "And this habitual perception, this inward consciousness itself, is properly a good conscience".⁴ The possession of such a "good conscience" constitutes the indirect witness of the Spirit.

One may object that human nature is not such that it can accurately judge whether or not it possesses this type of witness.

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1. Works v, 125 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 2. Wesley quotes the following texts to support this doctrine: I John 2:3, 5, 29; 3:14, 19, 24; 4:13; Rom. 8:14, 16.
 3. Acts 24:16.
 4. Works v, 137 "The Witness Of Our Own Spirit". Vide also ibid. viii, 189-90 "On Conscience", ibid. viii, 87 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

Wesley replies that the presence of the fruits of the Spirit is as palpably evident to the inward consciousness as the fact of one's existence. Man is able to affirm that his soul is alive to God and that he shows forth his salvation in ethical love, with the same certainty with which he affirms his existence, or with which he distinguishes light from darkness, rest from toil. The final arbiter¹ is man's inward consciousness, empirically inquiring from the facts of his living whether or not he is truly saved. Yet it must not be understood that the indirect witness of our own spirit excludes the operation of God's Spirit. In the final issue, it is God's Spirit² alone that allows man to discern what it has wrought. In this sense St. Paul's words are to be interpreted that describe the purpose of the gift of the Spirit: "... that we may know the things which³ are freely given to us of God". It is the divine agency that enables man to discern those fruits in himself which this same agency itself has wrought.

The direct witness must of necessity precede the indirect. For the former is concurrent with justification (regeneration and adoption). The latter is only possible after a man is reborn. For it consists in an inference made from the fruits of the new birth which clearly follow upon the new birth itself. Moreover, since the essence of the direct witness is a sense of pardon and sonship, it is clearly necessary that the immediately preceding condition be sin and alienation. For if it be otherwise, what sins need to be forgiven? To what pardon need the Spirit witness? If the fruits of salvation on which the indirect witness rests are already existent, the direct

1. Vide Works v, 114-17, 126-27 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. v, 141-42 "The Witness Of Our Own Spirit", ibid. viii, 49 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
2. Vide ibid. v, 116 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. vii, 190 "On Conscience".
3. I. Cor. 2:12.

witness is impossible. Of consequence, the direct precedes the in-
direct witness. Wesley is remarkably insistent on this point.¹

Lastly, the direct and indirect witnesses must always be connected together. No one must rest in any supposed direct witness of the Spirit that is not accompanied by the ethical fruits of the Spirit's presence. Likewise, the believer must not be content with the mere fruits of the Spirit. For the strain of living a moral life unconfirmed by the assuring presence of God in the soul, is likely to make shipwreck² of the faith.

V

The Degrees of Assurance

We now inquire into that part of Wesley's doctrine which affirms that there are varying degrees of assurance.

Wesley is reluctant to use the term "assurance of salvation" because it is not Biblical and because it is capable of Antinomian misconstruction.³ He prefers to use the following terms: (1) the (clear) assurance of faith:⁴ (2) the full assurance of faith: (3) the full assurance of hope.⁵ These categories are definitive in his theology and broadly correspond to the classification made by St. John: "babes", "young men" and "fathers" in Christ.⁶ The latter two degrees of assurance come after justification. The first occurs simultaneously with the experience of justification (although in thought it logically follows upon it).

The content of each type of assurance is substantially the same. That is, a believer is assured primarily of pardon, renewal and sonship,

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1. Vide Works v, 115f. "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. viii, 66 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Vide ibid. v, 133-34 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 3. Vide Letters i, 255, Sept. 28, 1738, ibid. iii, 222, Sept. 19, 1757, ibid. iii, 305, Dec. 1751.
 4. Heb. 10:22. Vide Letters i, 255, Sept. 28, 1738.
 5. Heb. 6:11. See also I Thess. 1:5.
 6. I John 2:12ff. Vide Letters v, 229, Mar. 16, 1771.

although there are a few minor differences that will be considered as they arise. The distinguishing characteristics are to be found in the depth, intensity and duration of the assurance; in other words, not in content but in degree.

i

The Clear Assurance of Faith

One must first understand that the "clear assurance of faith" is not to be confused with the mere possession of justifying faith. There is, as we have observed, a certain preliminary witness of God's pardoning love that elicits the convert's faith by which he is justified and reborn. To say, however, that God is willing to pardon a sinner, is not to say that justifying faith is itself an assurance of pardon. The sense of pardon is properly reserved for the direct witness of the Spirit, although it may be said that justifying faith issues in the subsequent sense of pardon, made possible by a high degree of faith.¹ In his early thought Wesley did not make such a distinction, we recall. His fondness for defining justifying faith in the words of the Anglican Homily on salvation led him to conceive justifying faith as itself an assurance of pardon. This opinion was rectified.² It becomes evident, therefore, that the ordinary (or "clear") assurance of faith is not to be reduced to the faith that justifies.

The clear assurance of faith, the lowest degree of assurance, is the common privilege of all Christians. It is a consciousness of being in the favour of God and of being accepted by Him as a son. It enables a believer truthfully to say: "The life which I now live, I

1. Vide Letters iii, 137-38, July 25, 1755, ibid. iii, 161-62, Feb. 5, 1756.

2. Vide supra pp. 138-39.

live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself¹ for me". Such assurance, however, is characterized by seasons of doubt.² It is frequently weakened or lost. Those who have attained it can always have a consciousness of justification to the extent of knowing that they are freed from the wrath of God; but often they are obsessed with such doubts and fears as make it impossible to know that they enjoy the more intimate privilege of adoption. Perhaps they may have known "... an attestation of their acceptance as perceptible as the sun at noonday: and yet those same persons at other times doubt whether they ever had any such attestation - nay, perhaps more than doubt, perhaps wholly deny, all that God has ever done for their souls ..."³ It is also possible that the direct witness may shine clearly while the indirect is temporarily under a cloud.⁴ However, even if doubts and fears do temporarily interrupt the consciousness of assurance, they do not destroy the reality of the experience of salvation. "Hark! The wind rises: the house shakes,⁵ but it is not overthrown; it totters, but it is not destroyed".

ii

The Full Assurance of Faith

The next degree of assurance is the full assurance of faith,

Πληροφορία πίστεως⁶, usually attained by one who is a "young man" in Christ. This witness is "... a feeling possession

1. Letters iii, 162, Feb. 5, 1756. Vide also Notes John 10:54.
2. Vide Letters ii, 192, Feb. 2, 1745, ibid. iii, 138, July, 25, 1755, ibid. iii, 305, Dec., 1751, ibid. iv, 170, Jan. 30, 1762, ibid. v, 229, Mar. 16, 1771, ibid. v, 358, Mar. 28, 1768, Works viii, 371 "The Principles Of a Methodist".
3. Letters ii, 70, June 25, 1746. Vide also ibid. ii, 103, July, 10, 1747, ibid. i, 279, Jan., 1739, ibid. ii, 89f., Mar. 25, 1747.
4. Vide Works v, 126, 130, 133 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
5. Letters iii, 161, Feb. 5, 1756.
6. Vide ibid. v, 175, Jan. 2, 1770, ibid. v, 229, Mar. 16, 1771, Works vii, 236-37 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, or, the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God ... that all your past sins are forgiven ..."¹ It is characterized by the following. First, it is much more intense than the ordinary assurance. Secondly, it relates - as does the ordinary assurance - to present pardon; but it is uninterrupted, continuous. It is sometimes spoken of as the "abiding" witness of the Spirit.² The contrast between the ordinary assurance and the plerophory of faith is put by Wesley in these words:

"The one is an assurance that my sins are forgiven, clear at first, but soon clouded with doubt or fear; the other is such a plerophory or full assurance that I am forgiven, and so clear a perception that Christ abideth in me, as utterly excludes all doubt and fear, and leaves them no place - no, not for an hour. So that the difference between them is as great as the difference between ~~between~~ the light of the morning and that of the mid-day sun".³

This type of assurance is wrought by the inspiration of the Spirit,⁴ is usually given instantaneously,⁵ and is a very high degree of faith, as are the clear assurance of faith and the full assurance of hope.⁶ Wesley readily acknowledges that there is a gradual growth in grace between the first and second degrees of assurance. Sometimes the full assurance may come shortly after the ordinary assurance, sometimes long after. It usually attends those who have attained a considerable degree of sanctification, "young men" in Christ. Of consequence, it is rarer than the ordinary assurance.

1. Works vii, 377 "Free Grace".

2. Letters v, 175, Jan. 2, 1770.

3. Ibid. ii, 192, Feb. 2, 1745. Vide also ibid. iii, 305, Dec. 1751, ibid. v, 385, Mar. 28, 1768, ibid. vi, 323, Oct. 6, 1778, Works vii, 371 "The Principles Of A Methodist".

4. Vide Notes Heb. 6:11.

5. Vide Letters iv, 170, Jan. 30, 1762.

6. Vide ibid. iii, 161-62, Feb. 5, 1756.

iii

The Full Assurance of Hope

The highest, most intense witness of assurance is the "full assurance of hope". This degree of assurance is very rare¹ and generally - though not always - accompanies the **stage**² of salvation known as Christian perfection. It is found in those who are perfected in love, who possess the mind that was in Christ, who bear the whole image of God, who are filled with the Holy Ghost.³ These are termed "fathers" in Christ.⁴ One who enjoys the full assurance of hope has a complete sense of pardon and the abiding witness in his heart that he is a son of God. In addition, he possesses a permanent testimony that if he continue in holiness of living, he shall persevere to the end and enjoy God in glory. Wherein the full assurance of faith concerns what is present,⁵ the full assurance of hope concerns what is future. This is the distinctive characteristic of the latter. It "... is such a clear confidence that I shall enjoy the glory of God as excludes all doubt and fear..."⁶

Yet it must not be understood that the full assurance of hope is the same thing as unconditional perseverance. We shall consider Wesley's view of the doctrine of final perseverance in a later chapter.⁷ It is enough to say here that he tolerated no doctrine of final perseverance. His experience with fallen saints

1. Vide Letters v, 358, Mar, 28, 1768.

2. Vide ibid. vi, 323, Oct. 6, 1778, ibid. vii, 57, Apr. 10, 1781, Notes I Thess. 5:16.

3. Vide ibid. v, 280, Oct. 4, 1771.

4. Vide ibid. v, 229, Mar. 16, 1771.

5. Vide Notes Heb. 6:11.

6. Letters vii, 58, Apr. 10, 1781.

7. Vide infra pp. 305-07.

taught him only too deeply that there is no state attainable from which man may not fall. How, then, is Wesley's disavowal of a doctrine of final perseverance reconcilable with a doctrine of full assurance? In two ways. First, although the full assurance of hope is initially communicated in a sudden ~~act~~, it is subsequently made¹ currently to the believer "from hour to hour", by grace. It is carried on as a kind of fluid process in his consciousness, "immediately given by the power of the Holy Ghost" "every moment".² It "... cannot subsist any longer than the heart cleaves steadfast-³ly to God". This implies, secondly, that the full assurance of hope is conditional. It promises the enjoyment of eternal glory if the believer continue in all holiness. For this reason Wesley acknowledges that there are degrees in growth before and after the experience of full assurance.⁴ For the same reason he repudiates any⁵ kind of unconditional assurance.

VI

The Relation of Assurance to Salvation

One will observe that Wesley believes each degree of assurance to be initially a sudden act of God in man's soul, preceded and followed by a growth in grace. This observation allows us to fit the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit into the framework of Wesley's other doctrines, especially into the doctrine of sant¹ification. As we shall understand in our next chapter, sant²ification

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1. Works vii, 378 "Free Grace".
 2. Notes Heb. 6:11.
 3. Letters vii, 58, Apr. 10, 1781.
 4. Vide ibid. v, 280, Oct. 4, 1771.
 5. Vide ibid. i, 255, Sept. 28, 1738, ibid. i, 290, Apr. 4, 1739, ibid. i, 308, May, 10, 1739, ibid. iii, 222, Sept. 19, 1757, ibid. iii, 305, Dec. 1751.

is an increase in holiness that begins in justification and culminates in Christian perfection. The three stages - or degrees - of assurance (the first at the time of justification, the last generally at the time when the believer is made perfect,) are points at which the subterranean workings of the Spirit crystallize and break through into man's consciousness; so that he suddenly feels a supernatural witness of God's immanent presence in his soul. This witness provides him with an increased sense of communion with God that assumes the form of a more and more intense feeling of deliverance from sin, and of sonship. This increases until the believer is made to realize that if he continues in holy living he shall finally be saved. This realization, together with a life lived in perfect love, constitutes the "seal of the Spirit", the highest witness of God's presence that it is possible to have, and one that accompanies the experience of Christian perfection.¹ We shall write of this in chapter seven.²

The experience of the witness in any of its degrees provides a strong incentive to the believer to be ethically holy. We have already remarked Wesley's keen insight that nothing is better calculated to elicit a believer's love than a "piercing sense" of God's love for him. When this becomes intense and constantly renewed, the believer cannot but love God the more, especially when the sense of God's love strikes upon him with all the immediacy, supernaturalness and vividness that characterize the direct witness of the Spirit. In particular, the combination of the direct and indirect witness is an effective means for inciting him to be zealous for ethical holiness. For the direct witness, with its sense of forgiveness and sonship, preserves a man in the moral

1. Vide Letters v, 280, Oct. 4, 1771.

2. Vide infra pp. 274-77.

struggles he must undergo in order to grow in grace. Although his soul is still rent by moral war, there is operative the unifying, strengthening consciousness that he is God's, and that God is with him. On the other hand, the indirect witness, consisting in an inference drawn from the ethical quality of his life, forces him to see to it that his life is holy. It compels him to guard over himself, to make certain that the presence of the Spirit issues in ethical fruits. Hence, the direct and indirect witness unite to encourage an effort for holiness, inspiring and sustaining the believer by a sense of God's love, forgiving and renewing him when he fails.¹

We next inquire how necessary Wesley considered the witness to be to salvation. We know that throughout his ministry he insisted that all men perceptibly experience the Spirit of God in their heart. This is ²sine qua non of salvation and an invariable constant of Wesley's theology. On the other hand, we find a variation of opinion as to whether or not an assurance of pardon and sonship is indispensably necessary to salvation. In his early years Wesley believed that the direct witness was necessary. As early as 1725 he wrote to his mother, that "if we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation ... then undoubtedly in this life we are ^{of} ² ³ ⁴ all men most miserable". In 1733, 1738, and frequently in the following years, ⁵ he asserted the necessity of

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1. Vide Letters iii, 319, Dec. 1751, *ibid.* iv, 116, Dec. 1, 1760, *ibid.* v, 24, Aug. 14, 1766, Works v, 120, 133-34 "The Witness Of The Spirit", *ibid.* v, 205f. "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 2. Letters i, 20, June, 18, 1725.
 3. Vide Works v, 219, "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 4. Vide Letters i, 275, Nov. 30, 1738.
 5. Vide *ibid.* ii, 23, June 1744, *ibid.* iii, 305, Dec. 1751, Journal ii, 375, Aug. 10, 1740, Works viii, 276 (1744), 290 (1746) "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

the direct witness of pardon and adoption. Occasionally, however, he encountered certain people who clearly were justified and regenerated but who had no conviction of pardon and sonship. Hence, he came to conceive these as "exempt cases" and conceded that rarely there are some who are genuinely saved but who have no direct assurance of faith.¹ This seems to be his final position. Although he did not arbitrarily insist that a man was unsaved if he was not assured by the direct witness of the Spirit of his pardon and adoption, he nonetheless strongly urged no one to stop short of such a witness.² It is the normal privilege and criterion of every genuine Christian. Every one who is truly saved should have at least the ordinary assurance of faith. Of course, this can be temporarily lost; but if it is, the believer is no longer able to say, "I am saved". For the loss of the witness is due to such sin as constitutes the believer no longer a saved person.³

The last point needs a short elucidation. How is the witness lost? The indirect witness is lost, naturally, when the quality of the believer's life is no longer holy enough to provide the inferential authentication of salvation.⁴ The direct witness, however, can abide in the believer's soul even when the indirect witness is temporarily checked or absent, particularly at the time of temptation.⁵ But if he falters, if he does not master ~~the~~

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1. Vide Works viii, 282 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. v, 133-34 "The Witness Of The Spirit", Letters iii, 103, Feb. 18, 1756, ibid. iv, 144, Apr. 2, 1761.
 2. Wesley's final position is found in Letters v, 358-59, Mar. 28, 1768, Works vi, 205-06 "On The Trinity" (1775).
 3. Vide Letters iii, 138, July 25, 1755.
 4. Vide Works v, 124, 132-33 "The Witness Of The Spirit", Letters iv, 170, Jan. 30, 1762.
 5. Vide Works v, 133-34 "The Witness Of The Spirit", Letters vi, 93, June, 19, 1774.

the irresolute will and base passions that still reside in him after justification and regeneration, then the Spirit will be so grieved that it will depart from him. The loss of the indirect witness will cause a loss of the direct. The Spirit is indeed¹ unwilling to depart from man. It will indulge occasional breaches of the filial relation between him and God. But when persistent sin has so secured the mastery of his soul as to offend the holy love that constitutes the Spirit's inmost nature, it takes its leave of the sinner. It cancels the witness of adoption and pardon at the same time that it signifies that the believer is no longer a believer, and no longer saved.

Lastly, Wesley believes that the loss of the direct witness can be caused by the evil machinations of Satan and his spirits. It is "... a plain, undeniable truth, that the god of this world can obliterate what the God of heaven has strongly imprinted upon the soul ..."²

VII

Tests of the Genuineness of the Witness of the Spirit

We next inquire by what tests a believer is able to know with certainty that God's Spirit genuinely witnesses that he is pardoned and adopted. These tests are bound up with a criticism which we have doubtless been pondering almost from the beginning of this chapter. The doctrine of assurance in large measure presupposes the reliability of the emotional, psychic nature of man. But this is commonly variable and subject to delusion, particularly in the intense religious experience to which Wesley sought to bring his converts. One may with justice be cautious about according too much validity to what Wesley calls the "spiritual sense", although one must yet appreciate what he means by this term.

1. Vide Works vii, 486ff. "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".
2. Letters ii, 103, July 10, 1747. Vide also ibid. ii, 89-90, Mar. 25,

Many of his critics, however, did not content themselves with the mere admonition to be cautious; they went further and charged him with "enthusiasm", a word of condemnation in the eighteenth century (We shall presently discuss "enthusiasm" in some detail). Wesley himself, however, perceived this danger. He formulated the charge of enthusiasm in such phrases as "the presumption of a natural mind", "the delusion of the devil", being "puffed up" in one's "fleshly mind". He made it clear that there are certain tests by which one may distinguish the testimony of God's Spirit with man's spirit from "damning presumption", from "working oneself up into a false persuasion" of salvation.

i

The first test is what one expects from Wesley. It is the test of experience. He would simply ask: Is there anything a man is surer of than what he has felt God work in his soul? If he has felt the Spirit witness that he is pardoned and accepted, why should he not be sure of it, and why should we doubt his word? Why should it seem incredible that if divine grace can perceptibly justify and renew, it can also work a certification of that experience? Surely you do not doubt but that God's grace can do this thing! This first test, then, is simply the reaffirmation of the validity of the inward consciousness for a perceptible apprehension of the Spirit as it operates as a witness.

The second test is more complex; it is experiential and rational. Wherein the first test is applied to the experience of assurance itself, this test rests on aspects of the conversion experience other than that of assurance. In its experiential character, this test is a survey of the religious experience that leads up to and follows upon the experience of assurance itself. It is reflective

1. Works v, 117 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

in that the human mind deliberately investigates what happened in the soul before and after justification.

Thus the scriptures ~~es~~ assert that a believer must ~~first~~ repent, and feel the remembrance of his sins to be grievous and their burden intolerable. But one who presumes on the gift of God "... is a stranger to ¹this repentance. He hath never known a broken and contrite heart". Similarly, an enthusiast has never felt inwardly the vast inward change that should take place in the soul in the experience of regeneration; nor has he known the truth of the declaration, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". ² "This is a language which he doth not understand. He tells you he always ^{was}/a Christian"; such a one ³"... has mistaken the voice of nature for the voice of God".

Likewise, scripture describes the fruits that follow upon the gift of the Spirit as "... love, joy, **peace**, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness. Whoever has these, inwardly feels them; and if he understands his Bible, ⁴he discerns from whence they come". However, a believer must do more than feel the fruits of the Spirit. He must perceive them to be in accord with scriptural definition, that they bear a definitely ethical character. The presumptuous pretender, on the other hand, conceives the assuring love of God as "... liberty to disobey, to break, not keep, the commandments of God". He "... has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path; in which he can say to his soul, 'Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry'. It follows with undeniable evidence, that he ⁵has not the true testimony ...". Thus one may distinguish him

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1. Works v, 118 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 2. Eph. 2:1.
 3. Works v, 119 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 4. Letters v, 363, Mar. 28, 1768.
 5. Works v, 120 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

"... that has the witness of God's love from an enthusiastic pre-
tender to it".¹

It is obvious that this second test in one sense is really an application of the indirect witness as a check upon the direct. Moreover, it ultimately rests - as does the former test - on that which the sceptic has most reason to doubt, the reliability of the individual consciousness. Both are liable to self-decep^etion. In the last analysis, these tests are ~~highly~~^{thoroughly} calculated to supply an effective refutation to subjectivism. They are really nothing but a reaffirmation of Wesley's fundamental position. There are, however, two further tests by which he would answer the charge of subjectivism.

The first is rooted in a realization that the witness of assurance is ultimately objective. It is wrought by an agent foreign to man. Some of Wesley's critics - as well as defenders - have likened the doctrine of assurance to the argument of Descartes, "Cogito, ergo sum". It is held that each posits the reliability of the human consciousness as a starting-point from which one can infer a certain reality. With Descartes, the reality is one's existence; with Wesley, it is the reality of one's pardon and sonship. This view will apply (in a sense) to the indirect witness, for the final arbiter of the genuineness of the indirect witness is man's consciousness, the reflective faculty. It will hardly apply, however, to the direct witness; and it is this that is really the heart of Wesley's doctrine. The direct witness is ultimately rooted in something other than man, - God. The witness of assurance is a witness of God's Spirit, not of man's consciousness. It is a witness by the Spirit with our spirits. It is wrought by an objective supernatural reality. It is essentially not subjectivistic. Therefore, if the

1. Letters ii, 105, July, 10, 1747.

sceptic chooses to doubt the genuineness of this witness, he must not only be able to cast legitimate suspicion on the validity of the human consciousness. He must further be able to prove that the divine reality to which Christianity imputes the character of the Spirit of Christ, is not such; that it does not reliably deal with man in the form of the Spirit. To question the reality of the witness of the Spirit, is to question the Christian revelation of God. Hence, the sceptic cannot impose his doubt of the character of God's Spirit on the Christian with any greater claim to truth, than one who believes in the reality of the direct witness can impose his views of the Christian apprehension of God on the sceptic. Therefore, if one believe that God as a Spirit deals with man in the way Christianity affirms, then one is able to believe that the direct witness of the Spirit is genuine, that it is not an illusion.

The second test by which Wesley replies to the charge of subjectivism, consists in an appeal beyond the individual to the collective experience of man. There is the confirmatory experience of multitudes of the children of God. Throughout the centuries God has not left Himself without witness. Wesley writes that one cannot read Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Origen, Augustine, Luther, Melancthon, without acknowledging that Christian thought has always affirmed the historic truth: "Every true Christian has the divine evidence of his being in favour with God".¹ This is not only a matter of historic evidence, however. The evidence from collective experience is contemporary.

1. Letters iii, 137, July 26, 1755. Vide also ibid. ii, 60-1, Dec. 30, 1745, ibid. iii, 159, Feb. 5, 1756, ibid. v, 21-2, July 9, 1766.

Wesley writes:

"You will naturally ask, with how many truly pious persons am I acquainted ... I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not: I am acquainted with more than twelve or thirteen hundred persons, whom I believe to be truly pious, and not on slight grounds, and who have severally testified to me with their own mouths that they do ~~know~~^{first} the day when the love of God was first shed abroad in their hearts and when His Spirit ~~first~~^{first} witnessed with their spirits that they were the children of God. Now, if you are determined to think all these liars or fools, this is no evidence to you; but to me it is strong evidence, who have for some years known the men and their communication".¹

The reality of the witness of assurance is confirmed by Wesley's own experience: "The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit that I was a child of God, ~~gave~~² me an evidence hereof, and I immediately cried, 'Abba, Father'". The reality of the witness is testified even by the ungodly. For these children of the world, "... not having the witness in themselves, one and all declare, none can know his sins forgiven".³

In this second way, therefore, Wesley asserts that the experience of the witnessing presence of the Spirit is enjoyed by Christians. Despite the abuses that attend this doctrine, it is authenticated in fact.

VIII

Wesley and the Charges of "Enthusiasm"

We conclude this chapter with a section on the charges of "enthusiasm" that were made against Wesley. These might perhaps be more properly treated in an appendix. Yet, the objections to Wesley's doctrine summarized in the word, "enthusiasm", apply to

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1. Letters ii, 47, Sept. 28, 1745.
 2. Works v, 127 "The Witness Of The Spirit".
 3. Ibid. v, 132 "The Witness Of The Spirit".

more than the doctrine of assurance. They constitute an attack upon the experiential character of the whole of salvation. They strike vitally at Wesley's theology of religious experience. For that reason they bear considerable importance, in fact sufficient importance to warrant treatment in a separate section that will allow us to understand Wesley's position.

It was inevitable that Wesley should provoke the anger of certain of his contemporaries by insisting that Christians should perceptibly experience the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He affronted eighteenth-century thought in two main respects: first, by asserting that Christianity is an experience of God and not a formal set of intellectual tenets or moral practices; secondly, by affirming at the same time that Christianity is revelatory, miraculous, that even as an experience it is essentially supernatural. He clearly saw the clash of this position with the temper of the age. He diagnosed the plight of eighteenth century religion in these words: "... some so interpret the gospel, as to place the holiness they are to be saved by in something divine, but exterior to themselves; and others, so as to place it in things really within themselves, but not more than human".¹ Here he laments, first, a view of religion which so removes God from man as to disallow an experience of His immanent nature. Secondly, he objects to the view which reduces religion to humanism; which attributes good to man, but which denies that its significance is "more than human", that it is derived from a supernatural reality, God. As a direct answer to this position Wesley preached the necessity of an experience of God Who is at once immanent and supernatural.

Wesley's position drew upon his head varied attacks, some

1. Works vii, 509 "On The Holy Spirit".

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scurrilous and unfair, other sincere and reasoned. The gist of these attacks lay in the charge of "enthusiasm", a term of great reproach in the eighteenth century. Some critics went further and accused Wesley of downright "madness", and of making his hearers mad. Others charged him with using his own dreams as oracles of God, ^{with} performing bogus miracles, etc. Such attacks were doubtless due in part to his utter freedom in publishing in detail in his Journals, account after account of abnormal conversions, of singular acts of providence; and to his interest in things supernatural so excessive as to border on superstition. The core of the controversy over enthusiasm, however, lay in the doctrines of perceptible inspiration and of the witness of the Spirit. The cautious scepticism of Hobbes and the probabilism of Butler typified an atmosphere in which pretension to religious certitude was looked upon as at least poor taste, if not impudence or blasphemy. Bishop Butler, it is reported, once told Wesley in an interview: "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing - a very horrid thing!"² It also happened on one occasion that a Methodist convert in Cornwall was ostracized from the community in which he lived; and when Wesley inquired concerning his absence, one replied: "Why, the man is well enough in other

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1. It is impossible even to begin to cite the authors who attacked Wesley. The reader is referred to Richard Green's Anti-Methodist Publications Issued During the Eighteenth Century; J.A. Swallow, Methodism In The Light of the English Literature of the Last Century (1895).
 2. Journal ii, 256f. Editor's footnote. Vide also Works xiii, 499-501 "Conversation With The Bishop of Bristol".

things, but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven"¹!

The charge of enthusiasm against Wesley first took the form of a denial that the ordinary operations of the Spirit were not confined to the apostolic age.² We have already seen how vital Wesley felt this criticism to be and his instant defence against it. Likewise, as a defence against those who contended that he enjoined ecstasies of the Spirit as a licence to indulge in sin, Wesley laid down the ethical and experiential³ tests we have considered. Thirdly, he took pains to declare that he never personally claimed to perform any miracles. In fact, although reserving the possibility of miracles, he denounced as enthusiast along with his critics, those who claimed to prophesy, heal the sick with a word, raise the dead, etc.³ However, although Wesley himself never claimed to perform miracles,⁴ his writings abound with occurrences whose miraculousness he insists cannot be gainsaid, and of which he felt himself to be a recipient, or an instrument. A typical illustration is the following, which, among others, provoked the Bishop of Gloucester to accuse Wesley of claiming to perform miracles.

"What I here aver is the naked fact. Let every one

1. Journal iii, 186, June, 25, 1745.

2. The Bishop of Lichfield, Richard Smallbroke, wrote in 1744, for example, that "the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, cannot possibly be applied to the private testimony of the Spirit given to our consciences, as is pretended by modern enthusiasts". He desires "to obviate the contagion of those Enthusiastical Pretensions", and he speaks of the Methodists as "Enthusiastical Seducers among us". Whitefield answered him in Some Remarks Upon A Late Charge Against Enthusiasm, Wesley in his Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion. Vide editor's note in Letters ii, 100.

3. Vide Works v, 472 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm".

4. Vide Letters ii, 136-37, Mar. 22, 1748, ibid. iv, 342 ff., Nov. 26, 1762.

account for it as he sees good. My horse was exceeding lame, and my head ached much. I thought, Cannot God heal man or beast by means or without? Immediately my weariness and headache ceased, and my horse's lameness in the same instant ... I believe thousands of serious Christians have found as plain answers to prayer as this".¹

Such accounts are quite consistent with Wesley's firm belief in divine providence as inclined to break through the course of natural law in order to perform a miracle,² and with which there is no distinction between "general" and "particular" operations.³

The final source of the charge of enthusiasm against Wesley lay in the extraordinary phenomena of mind and body that frequently characterized the conversion experiences of certain people in the course of his ministry.⁴ He rarely scrupled to report in detail such

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1. Letters iv, 344, Nov. 26, 1762.
 2. "Admitting then, that, in the common course of nature, God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himself from making exceptions to them, whensoever he pleases; either by suspending that law in favour of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels ... every answer to prayer, is, properly, a miracle. For if natural causes take their course, if things go on in their natural way, it is no answer at all. Gravitation therefore shall cease, that is, cease to operate, whenever the Author of it pleases". Works vi, 322 "On Divine Providence".
 3. Wesley is greatly annoyed with certain of his contemporaries, the poet, Pope, among them, who make a distinction between the "general" and "particular" providence which presides over the affairs of men. Wesley conceives such a distinction to be both illogical and blasphemous. (Vide Works vi, 313ff. "On Divine Providence".) His own belief in providence is illustrated in his occasional recourse to sortilege, the casting of lots, or opening the Bible at random. Perhaps the most interesting use of lot to ascertain the divine will is his decision not to marry Sophia Hopkey, a lady who engaged his affections for some time while he was a missionary in America. (Vide Journal i, 325, Mar. 4, 1737. Vide also *ibid.* ii, 97, Oct. 29, 1738, *ibid.* ii, 157-158, Mar. 28, 1739, Letters i, 235, Mar. 7, 1738, *ibid.* i, 298, Apr. 16, 1739, *ibid.* ii, 245, June 17, 1746.) This practice was seized upon by one of Wesley's opponents, the Rev. Church, as an instance of enthusiasm. Wesley replied that it was not forbidden by scripture, and that he never used it until reason had been used "as far as it could go". This defence was written in 1746. However, in his sermon "On Enthusiasm", written ca. 1749, we find no reference to the casting of lots or to the opening of the Bible at random. It seems safe to conclude from this fact, and from the absence of instances of sortilege in the later Journals, (from ca. 1744 on) that Wesley relinquished such superstitious methods of ascertaining the will of God. See E.H. Sugden's note in The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley ii, 97.
 4. The best discussion of the psychological significance of these phenomena is undoubtedly S. Dimond's "The Psychology of the Methodist Revival".

cases in his Journals. Often while he was preaching people dropped^{as} down/dead; others were seized with violent convulsions and tremors; some broke out in shouting, singing, in uncontrollable laughter, in cursing and blaspheming; sometimes their speech was intelligible, at other times not. Such phenomena inevitably shocked the orderliness of the eighteenth century Anglican mind, and shortly after he began his ministry Wesley was stigmatized as an impostor, as an agent of Satan whose preaching drove men mad. When confronted with such phenomena, Wesley made a tolerant and practical inquiry into their nature and faithfully reported the facts' as he found them.

He concluded, first, that such phenomena were always only incidental to the more significant fact that lives were salvaged and transformed. Sometimes he spoke of such phenomena as the pangs of the new birth; always, however, he contended only for the actual inward change. Some of his followers mistakenly confused these extraordinary symptoms with the reality itself of justification and regeneration. A few preachers actually turned "enthusiast".¹ Wesley was quick to nip this kind of thing in the bud, and made clear that he insisted not on the circumstances but on the substance of² salvation. On the other hand, it was incontestable that touches of extravagance bordering on madness frequently attended genuine conversion. Wesley could not deny this.

His explanation depends partly on that part of his doctrine of man which acknowledges the "vital union" that prevails between the mind and body. Each exercises a definite influence on the other. Accordingly, when a profound conviction of sin, accompanied by a fear of God's wrath, laid hold on the soul of the sinner, it was

1. Vide Letters iv, 199-200, Jan. 5, 1753, ibid. iv, 201, Feb. 8, 1763, ibid. iv, 202-03, Feb. 9, 1763, ibid. iv, 206, Mar. 20, 1763, ibid. iv, 209f., May, 1763
2. Vide ibid. v, 366f., Mar. 28, 1768.

not seldom likely that the disturbance of mind should extend to the body. "Yea, we may question, whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected, in so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following"¹. Hence, Wesley did not hesitate to ascribe such disturbances on occasion to the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, which, we recall, immediately affects the spiritual nature of man, and whose particular function (before justification) is to beget a strong conviction of sin. Wesley also consulted the scriptures which he found to contain instances of demoniac-possession. This evidence, together with his belief in the literal existence of evil spirits, caused him to attribute bodily symptoms partly to diabolic agency.

But once having disposed of the changes of enthusiasm that were falsely alleged against him, Wesley was not one to deny the reality of genuine enthusiasm. He detested the latter no less than his opponents; and on occasion his apt tongue could describe them as a "parcel of hot-brained enthusiasts, gaping after they know not what, not content with rational religion, but running mad after raptures and inward feelings"². He once found the Methodist Society in Bristol infected with enthusiasm which led them to charge "their own imaginations on the will of God". Wesley remarked:"... I know nothing so wicked or absurd ... and that without remedy"³. Wesley defined enthusiasm as mistaking the voice of one's own imagination for the inspiration of the Spirit, and in consequence, presuming to be a

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1. Works viii, 131 "A Farther Appel To Men Of Reason And Religion".
Vide also Letters iv, 362, Nov. 26, 1762, ibid. v, 361f., Mar. 28, 1768.
 2. Works v, 287 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iii".
 3. Journal ii, 475-76, July 13, 1741. Vide also ibid. ii, 130, Jan. 17, 1739.

child of God when in reality one is a child of the devil;¹ or, after the manner of his logical mind, "a species of madness" whereby a madman draws false conclusions from wrong premises. "He imagines himself to be what he is not: And therefore, setting out wrong, the farther he goes, the more he wanders out of the way".² Wesley takes pains to describe the different types of "that many-headed monster, Enthusiasm", and unsparingly denounces those who hypocritically³ pretend to possess the Holy Spirit when actually they do not.

He is most condemnatory when he carries the war into his opponents' camp; and, on the basis of his definition of an enthusiast as one who pretends to have what he does not, denounces as the most flagrant enthusiasts those false Christians who have the form but not the power of godliness; who accuse others of enthusiasm, but whose own lives are nothing but enthusiasm. The point of Wesley's whole reply to the charge of enthusiasm, however, is clearest seen when he willingly acknowledges that he is vitally concerned to drive all

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1. Vide Works v, 111 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. viii, 106 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 2. Ibid. v, 429 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm".
 3. Wesley classifies enthusiasts as follows: (1) Those who suppose themselves to be filled with the Spirit of grace when they are not, and are thereby fatally deceived. Among these are the people who receive the word with "no deepness of earth", who experience a superficial change of life only to lapse back into sin. To these, Wesley says, "Physicians, heal yourselves! But first know your disease: Your whole life is enthusiasm ..." (2) Those who falsely suppose themselves to be endued with the power of working miracles, of receiving extraordinary directions from God in visions, dreams, etc., and who fancy themselves in preaching or prayer to be influenced by the Spirit when they are not. (3) Those who think to receive the inspiration of the Spirit without using the proper means to that end, those who scorn the use of the sacraments, of the Bible, etc. (4) Those who are proud, and contemptuous of others who have not the inspiration they suppose themselves to have. Such people are devoid of genuine grace, subject to the whimsical and devilish guidance of their own heart and of the devil, "the king of the children of pride". Works v, 470-77 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm".

men into what the world supposes to be madness, " ... inward religion; to make them just as mad as Paul when he was so accounted by Festus". What the world calls "utter distraction" is in God's sight "sober, rational religion". It is the " ... genuine fruit, not of a distempered brain, not of a sickly imagination, but of the power of God in the heart, of victorious love, and of a sound mind"¹.

This last point really summarizes the matter. The controversies over miracles, a "general" and "particular" providence, "gifts" of the Spirit, etc., were but skirmishes incident to the main casus belli between Wesley and the religious thought of the eighteenth century, - whether or not there were such a thing as ^asaving experience of "the power of God in the heart". Wesley invincibly believed that there was. This was the crux of what he was fighting for. It must be admitted that his cause was not helped by the element of superstition in his character. It often provided opportunity for misconstruction of his position. Yet it was this quality of credulousness that in other ways contributed to his genius. And always it was accompanied by a quality of mind that can best be spoken of as his sanity. Although he protested vigorously against the attenuated rationalism of his age, Wesley was always a firm believer in the power of reason. As we have pointed out, this is where he broke with Quaker doctrine. For the same reason we find him "appealing" to "men of reason and religion" in defence of his doctrines; and writing that "I am ready to give up every opinion which I cannot by calm, clear reason defend";² that "true religion is the highest reason";³ that "religion is the spirit of a sound mind",⁴

1. Works viii, 29 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

2. Letters iv, 333, Nov. 17, 1759.

3. Ibid. iv, 118, Dec. 1, 1760.

4. Works v, 470 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm".

that " ... to renounce reason is to renounce religion ...¹

We may well concur in the statement of H.M. Gwatkin: "A very little study of John Wesley ... will show one of the sanest² minds of the eighteenth century".

1. Letters v,364, Mar.28,1768.

2. The Knowledge of God ii,242. Quoted by E.H.Sugden in The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley i,203.

Chapter VI

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

I

Introduction

It will be recalled that the chapter on justification and regeneration was concluded with a quotation in which Wesley pointed out, that "the people called Methodists" hold in balance the doctrine of full, free, present justification on the one hand, and of sanctification of heart and life on the other. This quotation was cited in order to make clear the necessity of accompanying the righteousness imputed in justification with inherent righteousness. We have already written of this in connection with the doctrines of regeneration and perceptible inspiration, and have shown that the new birth and the inspiration of the Spirit are mainly necessary in order to make the believer's life inherently holy. These doctrines, however, are but explicit expressions of a basic idea that underlies Wesley's entire theology, that " ... holiness ... is the end of all the ordinances of God".¹ "The weight of all religion, we apprehend, rests on holiness of heart and life".² The doctrine of sanctification represents the most distinctive expression of this idea. Hence, at the same time that it is a positive affirmation, it is a direct attack on Antinomianism. Accordingly, Wesley vigorously defends the belief that one is not made completely holy at the time of justification,³ that there must follow a continual "growth in grace". Justification and regeneration are but the "threshold", "the first entrance", "the

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1. Works vii, 376 "Free Grace".
 2. Ibid, viii, 243 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Ibid. xiv, 276 "Preface To An Extract From the Life Of Madame Guion".

first point" of sanctification.¹ The contrary opinion quite "blocks up" the possibility of progressive sanctification and of Christian perfection.² To say that sanctification follows upon regeneration, however, is not to say that it implies any new kind of holiness, for love is the essence of holiness wherever it be found. It does, however, imply an increased degree of holiness.³ Thus the significance of Wesley's care to delineate the proper relation between justification (and regeneration,) and sanctification, is understood in light of a fundamental idea of his theology, to establish holiness.

Sanctification is really the end to which justification and even regeneration are tributary. The establishment of a formal relationship of acceptance in justification, and the vast inward change from sinfulness to righteousness in regeneration, are but means to an end, the further work of God in the soul in which sin is progressively extirpated and Christian love is progressively inculcated and perfected. Yet, important as holiness is, it in turn is but a means to a more wonderful end, perfect communion with God. Christianity aims at nothing less than restoring the most depraved sinner to intimate,

1. Works vii,205 "On God's Vineyard". Vide also ibid. vi,487-88 "On Patience", ibid. viii,285 "Minutes of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x,272,274-76 "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend".
2. Vide ibid. v,168-69 "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. vi,51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. x,263 "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend", Letters v,325, July 1, 1772.
3. The relation between justification and sanctification is defined as follows. "Many persons...have spoken of the work of sanctification, taking the word in its full sense, as if it were quite of another kind, as if it differed entirely from that which is wrought in justification. But this is a great and dangerous mistake...Whereas in that moment when we are justified freely by his grace, when we are accepted through the Beloved, we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit...There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness, to inward holiness...'Well, but what more than this can be implied in entire sanctification?' It does not imply any new kind of holiness: Let no man imagine this. From the moment we are justified, till we give up our spirits to God, love is the fulfilling of the law...Love is the sum of Christian sanctification; it is the one kind of holiness, which is found, only in various degrees..." Works vi,387-88 "On Patience".

joyous fellowship with his Creator and Redeemer. This fellowship is not reserved for the life to come. It is a quality of spiritual life that is promised to man as an inhabitant of this world, dwelling in a mortal body. Before it can be enjoyed, man must be made holy. Wesley therefore conceives sanctification as a process that fits and qualifies man for fellowship with God, wherein justification entitles him to it.

When this idea is conceived in terms of doctrine, we have the following broad parallels. The increase of holiness in experience corresponds to sanctification as doctrine. Similarly, communion with God corresponds to the doctrine of Christian perfection. Just as holiness is best understood when interpreted in light of the end to which it is a means, i.e. communion with God; so the doctrine of sanctification is best understood when interpreted in light of the doctrine of Christian perfection. In other words, man is not only being saved from something in sanctification, i.e. alienation and sin. He is also being saved into something, i.e. fellowship with God through love.¹ Thus before studying in detail the increase of holiness in sanctification, it is first necessary that we understand what may be called Wesley's doctrine of communion with God. Accordingly we must anticipate in part the next chapter, Christian perfection.

II

The Doctrine Of Communion With God

The doctrine of "communion with God"² is first intimated in the doctrine of created man.³ We remember that the purpose of the creation of an immortal spirit is communion with its Creator. The

1. Vide Works vi, 276 "The End Of Christ's Coming".

2. Letters iv, 233, Mar. 25, 1764. Vide also ibid. v, 261, June 25, 1771, ibid. v, 286, Oct. 25, 1771, ibid. vi, 45, Sept 29, 1773.

3. Vide supra pp. 9-10.

doctrine of communion with God is also implied in the doctrine of sin, which is defined, we recall, as alienation of man's soul from God. It is most clearly intimated in Wesley's doctrine of the incarnation and atonement, which are essentially the revelation of God's love through which He has chosen as Redeemer to repair the alienation of man incurred through original sin. In justification, fellowship with God is the fruit of man's appropriation of the merits of Christ through faith; God forgives man for Christ's sake and welcomes him as a son. The witness of the Spirit provides man with a conscious experience of the presence of God within himself. All of Wesley's doctrines have to do directly or indirectly with the restoration of man to fellowship with his heavenly Father. In this sense, the doctrine of communion with God is the foundation stone of Wesley's theology. For as a representation of the purpose of salvation, it sustains and informs all the other doctrines that describe how salvation is wrought. In another sense, it is the keystone of the arch of Wesley's thought, in that the experience of communion with God in Christian perfection is the realization of that purpose. In accord with this conception, the main body of this thesis began with the statement that God created man for Himself, to love, know and enjoy Him; for the same reason it ends with an elucidation of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection.

When we examine this doctrine in greater detail, we find that communion with God is at once a claim and a promise. Its nature as a claim is seen in the manner in which all the dispensations of God unite to pronounce upon man the claim that he is not his own, that he is God's. This is first to be observed in the doctrine of the purpose of man's creation. "For what end is life bestowed upon the children of man? Why were we sent into the world?"¹ Wesley re-

1. Works vii, 229 "What Is Man?"

plies: "... to glorify Him who made ¹"us" for himself, and to love and enjoy him forever". "But if he has made us, and given us all we have; if we owe all we are and have to him; then surely he has a right to all we are and have ..."² The creation of man fixes up-
on his immortal spirit a divine claim; that "in all things whatso-
ever, whether of a religious or civil nature, in all the common,
as well as sacred, actions of life", man may "keep the glory of
God in view, and steadily pursue in all this the one end of ... be-
ing, the planting or advancing the vital knowledge and love of God,
first in" his "own soul, then in all mankind".³

Furthermore, God is the " ... proprietor of all we are, and all we have ... not only by right of creation, but of purchase; for He died for all, and therefore 'died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them'".⁴ The claim of love has been most compellingly pro-
nounced in the revelation of Jesus Christ, whose atonement, approp-
riated by man's contrite faith, has drawn his soul unto God. The
redemption even more than the creation of man announces with all
the constraint of divine love, God's quest for man's soul. The in-
tensity of this constraint is measured by the importunity of that
love which became man and bore the sins of the world. In the re-
demption, therefore, as in the creation of man, God can be seen
claiming all men for life with Himself. Indeed, in the profoundest
sense God is " ... the end of all the souls he has made, the centre
of all created spirits ...' To him therefore, alone, our heart is
due. And he cannot, he will not, quit his claim, or consent to its

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1. Works v, 427 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii". Wesley specifically acknowledges his debt to the Westminster Confession on this point. Vide ibid. vii, 267 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 2. Ibid. vii, 338 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart".
 3. Notes I Cor. 10:31.
 4. Works xiv, 271 "Preface To A Collection Of Forms Of Prayer For Every Day In The Week (1775)". Vide also Letters iv, 301, May, 25, 1765.

being given to any other. He is continually saying to every child of man, 'My son, give me thy heart'.¹

We pause to point out that we are dealing here with more than a single theological doctrine. The doctrine of communion with God as a claim of love fixed on all mankind, reveals Wesley's deepest convictions about the meaning and destiny of life. It is a summary of his entire attitude toward life, the fundamental point of view from which he sets out. It is the a priori affirmation that sustains all his thought. In this sense it may be said to represent his Weltanschauung, as it were, the construction he places upon and the meaning he accords to life. The source, the purpose, and the destiny of human life are found in the God of Christ. Wesley's words are these:

"The one perfect Good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake, - the fruition of Him that is All in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them; the having 'fellowship with the Father and the Son'; the being joined to the Lord in one Spirit. One design you are to pursue to the end of time, - the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things, so far as they tend to this. Love the creature as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole End, as well as Source, of your being".²

Communion with God is furthermore a promise. Christianity is a testament that what God has enjoined upon man as a claim, He will fulfil as a promise. Man is not only admonished to conduct his life in accord with the claim that prevails over it. He is also assured by the authority of Christ's revelation of God, that "the promise" of "perfect love",³ of "constant communion with God",⁴ will be

1. Works vi, 436 "Spiritual Idolatry".

2. Ibid. v, 207-08 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".

3. Notes Heb. 10:36.

4. Letters vi, 45, Sept. 29, 1773.

achieved in his own soul. God not only discovers to man the purpose of his being as an obligation to be risen to, but ^{also} as a gift to be enjoyed. "God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands... It shall be unto us according to his word".¹

One recognizes here as in other instances of Wesley's acceptance of the New Testament promises, that credulousness of mind of which we have written in the doctrine of grace. He accepts confidently the New Testament - in particular the Johannine - ideal of fellowship with God as the norm of Christian experience. The same instinct that led him to accept literally other promises of the Christian revelation, (the reality of the new birth, the work and witness of the Spirit,) led him also to believe that man may, while dwelling on earth in a mortal body, experience the blessed communio Deo that constitutes the purpose of the creation and redemption of his immortal spirit. Moreover, as will be seen more clearly in the next chapter, Wesley takes for his ideal of communion with God nothing less than the cardinal injunction of the Christian gospel, a quality of life that is perfect love to God and man. "Accordingly, when it is said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind', it is not only a direction what I shall do, but a promise of what God will do in me".²

But to conceive communion with God as a promise necessitates that one also believe God is able to accomplish it. Thus Wesley is not only dissatisfied with any doctrine which posits less than perfect communion as the promise God makes to man through His Son; he is also dissatisfied with any interpretation of Christianity that disparages the might of divine grace to achieve what it enjoins.

1. Works v, 314 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - v"
2. Letters ii, 381, Jan. 4, 1749.

This will become clearer when we examine (in the doctrine of perfection) the nature of the faith that allows man to receive the blessing of uninterrupted fellowship with God. We shall find that faith is defined as both "the conviction that God hath promised it in the scripture", and as the confidence "that what God hath promised he is able to perform".¹

Yet, "... every promise has a condition".² The condition of communion with God is inherent holiness. To the extent that man is holy, he dwells in fellowship with a holy God. Accordingly, as man is progressively sanctified, the promise is progressively wrought from the time of justification onwards. "While thou seekest God in all things, thou shalt continually find him ... the fountain of all holiness continually filling thee ..."³ "According to the degree of our love ..."⁴ is the degree of our communion. The ideal of perfect communion, however, necessitates a very advanced degree of holiness. Wesley writes: "In order to attain this perfect love ... it is necessary, not only that the soul be purged of all wilful, habitual sin; but likewise that it be enlightened by the knowledge and practice of all virtue, before it can be united to God".⁵ For there is a "Μεγάλη Χάσμα," "a great gulf, a huge chasm", between the "first love" of justification and the "perfect love" of Christian perfection.⁶ Elsewhere Wesley uses the figure of the path of holiness as the "nar-

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1. Works vi, 52 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation". Vide infra pp. 267-70.
 2. Letters v, 286, Nov. 3, 1771. Vide also Works x, 290 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 3. Works v, 363 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount -viii".
 4. Ibid. vii, 40 "An Israelite Indeed".
 5. Ibid. xiv, 204 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern".
 6. Ibid. xiv, 230 "Preface To Extracts From The Works Of The Puritans".

row way" that leads to the gate of life abundant and eternal with God. "No sinner can pass through that gate, until he is saved from all his sins". He must be "... inwardly changed, ^othoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind: Otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life ... For, 'narrow is the way that leadeth unto life;' the way of universal holiness".¹ In terms of doctrine, it is sanctification that prepares the believer to receive God's second blessing, Christian perfection. This preparation is achieved in two ways; negatively by the conquest of sin; positively by the disposition and practice of Christian love. In essence, these constitute sanctification. And we now turn to a study of Wesley's conception of the former in order to understand how that holiness is established without which no man can see the Lord.

III

Sanctification as the Progressive Extinction of Sin

i

The Persistence of Sin

We recall from the doctrine of regeneration Wesley's insistence that a believer is delivered from the guilt and power, but not from the reality of sin. Ultimately, of course, this idea is traceable to the doctrine of natural depravity which asserts that every faculty and temper of man's being is penetrated with the leprous infection derived from Adam. In the years immediately following his conversion, however, Wesley believed so firmly in the power of grace as able not only to save but also to sanctify man in the initial conversion experience, that he did not scruple to say that (in justification and regeneration) believers are saved from all "sin" and "sins", without any "limitation" or "restriction".² This is

1. Works v,408 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xi". Vide also ibid. x,364 "A Blow At The Root".

2. Vide ibid v,10-11 "Salvation By Faith".

especially apparent in the sermon preached in June, 1738, "The Marks Of The New Birth"¹. He interprets St. John's words, "...who-²soever is born of God sinneth not," as meaning that salvation is literally salvation from all sin. The incongruity of this position with experience and the opportunity it presented to Antinomianism, forced Wesley to alter it. That he temporarily held it, however, illustrates his credulous acceptance of the New Testament ideal as the norm of Christian salvation, and his confidence in the power of grace to lift man to that ideal. It is an instance of insufficient restraint of his enthusiasm for perfectionism. When experience³ taught him differently, he qualified his position by saying that the children of God do not sin as long as they "keep themselves"⁴ and preserve "the 'seed' of loving faith".⁵

This later opinion is indicative of our present main point, that "to have sin is one thing: to commit sin is another".⁶ For "...before the root of sin is taken away believers may live above the power of it".⁷ "The usurper is dethroned. He remains indeed where he

1. Vide Works v, 214-15.

2. I John 5:18.

3. For example, see the sermon, "The First Fruits Of The Spirit", Works v, 91.

4. Letters iii, 170, Mar. 12, 1756.

5. Notes I John 3:9.

6. Letters ii, 47, Sept. 28, 1745.

7. Ibid. vi, 217, May 3, 1776.

once reigned; but remains in chains".¹ In his customary manner Wesley² defends this doctrine by appeal to scripture and experience, and by the authority of the IXth Article of the Church of England which asserts that "...the lust of the flesh, called in Greek, φύσις³ σαρκός ..." remains in the justified. He also writes that the doctrine which affirms that sin does not remain in the redeemed is a new doctrine, introduced by Count Zinzendorf of the Moravian brethren; and "whatever doctrine is new must be wrong..."⁴

His anxiety to enforce this point leads him to write that even the deliverance from guilt wrought in justification is to be understood in a "cautious" sense. It is true that no "...justified believer has any real guilt. Guilt cannot consist with justification:⁵ they are directly opposed to each other". On the other hand, because the justified feel inbred sin remaining in them and constantly breaking through in various ways, they are convinced that they deserve punishment although they know that the atonement of Christ intercedes for them. God's "strict justice" is as rigorously operative as ever, and "this pronounces them to be still worthy of death..." But actual punishment is not visited upon them, for "His life, and death, and intercession still interpose between them and condemnation".⁶ Wesley sometimes speaks of this as a "deep conviction of our demerit".⁷ His acknowledgment of this persistent feeling of demerit is indicative of his more fundamental purpose, i.e. to bring home to the soul of the believer a realization of the deep-rooted sin remaining in him.

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1. Works v, 154 "On Sin In Believers".
 2. He cites I Cor. 3:1-3; II Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:17; Rev. 2:2-4; 3:2-3. Vide Works v, 148-49 "On Sin In Believers".
 3. Works v, 145 "On Sin In Believers".
 4. Ibid. v, 149 "On Sin In Believers". Vide also ibid. v, 157-58 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 5. Letters viii, 272, May 20, 1762.
 6. Works v, 163-64 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 7. Ibid. v, 169 "The Repentance Of Believers".

Numerous passages in Wesley's writings attest the importance of this point for his doctrine of sanctification,¹ well expressed in the following lines:

Yet still ten thousand lusts remain,
And vex your soul, absolved from sin;
Still rebel nature strives to reign,²
And you are all unclean, unclean!

The attitude of the believer toward inbred sin will be discussed presently. Our concern here is to record Wesley's insistence on the fact that sin is persistent.

ii

Sanctifying Grace

Against this undeniable fact Wesley places another consideration, divine grace, which in sanctification bears the same character that it does throughout his theology. It similarly flows directly from God, given without any thought of merit or power in man, made available by "... Jesus Christ the righteous, through whom alone it is purchased for us ... it is He alone that worketh it in us ..."³ It is also communicated by the Holy Spirit, which, having fully taken up its abode in the soul of the believer at justification and achieved and witnessed to his regeneration and adoption, works in man increasing righteousness. Indeed, as its very title suggests, the Spirit is conceived as the "immediate"⁴ and "efficient" cause⁵ of all holiness. Holiness, we recall, is the "proper end and design" of all its influences,⁶ "...purifying and sanctifying our souls and

1. Vide Works v, 91 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit", ibid. v, 144ff. "On Sin In Believers", ibid. v, 157ff. "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. v, 444f "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law", ibid. vi, 51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vi, 80 "The Wilderness State", ibid. vii, 62 "On Zeal", ibid. vii, 230 "What Is Man?", Letters ii, 190, Feb. 2, 1745, Journal ii, 359, June 24, 1740, Notes Matt. 11:28.

2. Quoted by Wesley in Letters v, 214, Dec. 28, 1770.

3. Works v, 387-88 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix". Vide also ibid. v, 164 "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. v, 189 "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vi, 491 "On Patience".

4. Letters iii, 9, July 17, 1749.

5. Notes Rom. 5:5.

6. Works vii, 491 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit".

bodies, to a full and eternal enjoyment of God".¹ Because of this essential character, Wesley insists that every believer must perceptibly experience the Spirit's activity. We find him in a sermon, for example, laying down as a test of the ethical quality of his hearers' lives the question: "Are you filled with the Holy Ghost?"²

But although the perceptible presence of the Spirit is insisted upon as the mark of sanctifying grace, here as elsewhere it is accompanied by the mystery that attends the deep things of God. Wesley writes that "by the operations ... of the Spirit, I do not mean the manner in which He operates, but the graces which He operates ... in a Christian".³ He frequently uses the phrases, "walking after the Spirit",⁴ the "fruits of the Spirit", to represent the sanctifying life of God in the soul of the believer. His most explicit description of the activity of the Spirit in man is found in a figure which represents the continued inspiration of the Spirit as

"... God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, and a reaction of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God ... and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, ... words ... works ... to be a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus".⁵

Sanctifying grace is also mediated through the same means as convincing and justifying grace, the sacraments, prayer, the Bible. Believers are to make use of these with a heart and mind confidently disposed to receive all that God has promised to give.⁶

In its sanctifying office grace confronts the sinful believer

1. Letters iii, 9, July 17, 1749.

2. Vide Works v, 47ff. "Scriptural Christianity".

3. Letters ii, 74, June 25, 1746.

4. Vide Works v, 89 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".

5. Ibid. v, 232-33 "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God".
Vide also Notes I Thess. 5:16.

6. Vide Works v, 190ff. "The Means Of Grace", ibid. vii, 148ff. "The Duty Of Constant Communion", Letters iii, 366f., Jan. 6, 1756.

especially in its character as promise and power. In the contest with the vestiges of his carnal nature, grace imparts to man the assurance that God intends nothing less than that he shall be made perfect. Such perfection includes both the complete extinction of sin and the implanting of perfect love; it is an assurance of these that sanctifying grace communicates. Wesley's confidence in the promissory nature of grace is seen in the following:

"... God is merciful to thee a sinner!... God is love; and Christ hath died! Therefore, the Father himself loveth thee! Thou art his child! Therefore he will withhold from thee no manner of thing that is good. Is it good, that the whole body of sin, which is now crucified in thee, should be destroyed? It shall be done!... Is it good, that nothing should remain in thy heart but the pure love of God alone? Be of good cheer! 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength'. 'Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it'".¹

Despite the presence of the sin that abases them, believers are inspired by "the great promise",² so that "... sustained and encouraged ... we may obtain all that He has promised".³ The prospect of perfection is the strongest possible incentive to persevere in holiness. "For to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us".⁴

Sanctifying grace also confronts the believer with power. Again, it is acknowledged to be "almighty".⁵ "The same grace which at first united him to God is able to continue that happy union, in spite of all the rage, and all the strength, and all the subtlety of the enemy".⁶ This quality of power is brought home to the believer most

1. Works v, 96-7 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit". Vide also Letters iv, 208, Apr. 7, 1763, ibid. iv, 308-09, July 5, 1765, ibid. vi, 327, Oct. 18, 1778.

2. Notes Luke 1:74.

3. Ibid. II Pet. 1:4. Vide also Letters v, 286, Nov. 3, 1771.

4. Works vi, 37 "Satan's Devices". Vide also Letters vi, 66, Jan. 10, 1744.

5. Works v, 170 "The Repentance Of Believers".

6. Ibid. vi, 447 "On Dissipation".

vividly when he contemplates the extent to which sin still pervades his being. For in this stage of salvation, as in all, by nature there is no good nor power for good in man.¹ The ideal of perfection to which he is striving "... overshoots all our native courage, and resolution, as well as all our precepts of philosophy. The power of custom is not able to train us up to this, nor the most exquisite rules of human education",² neither "... all the grace which is given at justification..."³ Inbred sin is too obdurate and deep-rooted to be overcome save by the increased power of the Spirit in the soul. In fact, of ourselves "... we can do nothing but add to sin ..." ⁴ "But fear not," Wesley continues, the promise of God stands sure; "... yet a little while, and you shall be endued with power from on high, whereby you may 'purify yourselves, even as He is pure'; and be 'holy, as He which hath called you is holy'".⁵ "He is able to save you from all the sin that still remains ... Indeed his bare power to do this is not a sufficient foundation for our faith that he will do it ... unless he hath promised it. But this he has done: He has promised it over and over in the strongest terms".⁶

Sanctifying grace pronounces with urgency the claim of perfection on man.. The believer is assured that in one swift act God will destroy the roots of sin cleaving to the soul, and will receive him into communion with Himself. To be prepared for this blessing, Wesley insists that one believe that "... he is not only able, but willing to do it now! Not when you come to die; not at any distant time; not tomorrow, but today".⁷ "'Behold, now is the accepted time'".⁸ (We shall understand presently how the urgency of grace

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1. Vide Works v, 164 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 2. Ibid. v, 140 "The Witness Of Our Own Spirits".
 3. Ibid. v, 165 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 4. Ibid. v, 204 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 5. Journal ii, 359, June 24, 1740.
 6. Works v, 165-66 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 7. Ibid. vi, 492 "On Patience". Vide also ibid. vi, 52-3 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 8. Ibid. v, 167 "The Repentance Of Believers".

influences man's faith.) Lastly, sanctifying grace is continually present to the believer, uninterrupted except by sin so grievous as to cause the Holy Spirit to withdraw. It is given "from moment to moment"; it does not allow "a stock" to be "laid up" for many years.¹ Rather, "every hour, yea, every moment", one is filled with "power from on high".²

iii

The Tension Between Sin and Grace

Wesley's acknowledgment of the persistent reality of sin, and his belief in the promise and power of sanctifying grace, represent the most clear cut manifestation of the principles of moral realism and perfectionism as they operate in his soteriology. On the one hand, his apprehension of the holiness of God leads him to acknowledge the reality of sin even in those who are justified. The offence sin gives to God is no more to be trifled with here than anywhere else in salvation. On the other hand, his apprehension of divine love leads him to assert that despite this sin, God's grace beseeches man with the promise of perfection and with the assurance that He is able to perform what He promises. Wesley is unwavering in his emphasis on sin; he is invincible in his faith in grace. The tension between these two principles underlies his entire theology. In the present case, this tension is established within the soul of the believer by the promise of grace asserting itself against the reality of sin in such a way as to generate the holiness necessary to fit him for life with God. Within his consciousness there exists a profound despair over his sin, exceeded only by a profounder trust in grace. We shall investigate this in detail presently. Our concern here is to point out that the tension in Wesley's doctrine corresponds to the convert's experience.

1. Works v, 164 "The Repentance Of Believers".
2. Ibid. vi, 398 "Of The Church". Vide also ibid. v, 363 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-viii".

It is obvious that the ability of this tension to produce holiness is destroyed if either pole be relaxed. If the promise of perfect salvation be weakened, the believer is deprived of the dynamic hope that sustains and encourages him in his progress, and he is likely to sink back into despair and sin. Likewise, if he is not vividly made conscious (though not in a morbid way) of the vicious reality of sin whose roots infect his nature, he thinks to leap exultingly at one bound into what is really a false holiness, guilty of a superficial view of himself. The tension must be preserved in the believer's experience as it is correspondingly preserved in Wesley's theology. Nothing less than a Calvinist view of human depravity, together with a perfectionist view of the promise and power of grace that borders on Antinomianism, establishes the tension that generates holiness. This tension is the nerve of Wesley's theology. One understands again the meaning of his cryptic statement that the true gospel comes within a hair's breadth of Calvinism and Antinomianism.¹

The interrelation of these principles appears variously in the doctrine of sanctification. Most simply, Wesley speaks of them as "the contrary motions of nature and grace", and urges the believer² "carefully to examine" them as they work in his soul. It is true that there will always be something inscrutable in their operation. One cannot penetrate the deepest recesses of the soul and definitely ascertain how these principles interact to achieve holiness. "The mystery of iniquity" and "the mystery of godliness", though realities, yet remain mysteries.³ Yet it is possible to examine their interrelation from a point of view that will allow us to understand in part how

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1. Vide Works viii, 284 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Letters iv, 208 Apr. 7, 1763.
 2. Works xiv, 205 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern".
 3. Vide Notes II Thess. 2:7, Works v, 44-5 "Scriptural Christianity", ibid. v, 258 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i", ibid. vi, 253ff. "The Mystery Of Iniquity".

sanctification as the progressive conquest of sin is carried on.

A

Evangelical Repentance

This approach lies in a study of the attitude of the believer to these two principles operating in him. Within his experience the principle of moral realism begets an attitude of repentance. Holiness begins with the contrite acknowledgment of the sin that remains in his nature. This conviction of inbred sin is so necessary that Wesley speaks of it as an "indispensable condition"¹ for the realization of perfection. Although God's promise to the Christian is "firm as the pillars of heaven",² it cannot be realized "... unless he is deeply convinced of that inbred 'corruption of his nature'..."³; for "... it is the consciousness of this which constrains us to groan, for a full deliverance, to Him that is mighty to save".⁴ This attitude of conviction of sin and of desire to have God efface it, is summarized in the phrase, "evangelical repentance"; which is to be distinguished from "legal repentance" in that it follows after justification and implies no actual guilt or fear of the wrath of God. Evangelical repentance clearly rests on the doctrine of the persistence of sin. Wesley defines it as follows:

"It is properly a conviction, wrought by the Holy Ghost ... of the φρόνημα σαρκός, the carnal mind, which 'does still remain ... even in them that are regenerate'... With this conviction of the sin still remaining in our hearts, there is joined a clear conviction of the sin still remaining in our lives; still cleaving to all our words and actions".⁵

This repentance, as well as that preceding justification, is essentially man's "experimental"⁶ knowledge of himself.⁷ The depth of ^{this} self-

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1. Vide Works vi, 51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 2. Ibid. x, 290 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 3. Ibid. v, 208 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 4. Ibid. v, 169 "The Repentance Of Believers". Vide also ibid. xiv, 230 "Preface To Extracts From The Works Of The Puritans".
 5. Ibid. vi, 50 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 6. Ibid. v, 164 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 7. Vide ibid. v, 203ff. "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vi, 398 "Of The Church".

knowledge is such that Wesley asserts "... there will be a far deeper, a far clearer and fuller knowledge of our inbred sin, of our total corruption by nature, after justification, than ever there was before it".¹ Indeed, the extent of the believer's alienation from God is still so great that he is quite likely to despair, particularly when he contemplates the demand of the moral law to which he is subject. (We shall write of this presently.)

It is not needful, however, that a believing soul should do despair as to give up the struggle, for the promise of grace still claims him. Yet it is needful and "... meet thou shouldest abhor thyself; and it is God who hath wrought thee to this self-same thing".² For such abhorrence, arising out of a knowledge of his sinful self, drives the believer back on the divine grace. The conviction of sin issues in a feeling of utter helplessness,³ and he casts himself again and again through faith on the power of God to do what he cannot do. For this reason Wesley writes that "... we are to retain both one and the other, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge of God, unto our lives' end".⁴

B

Sanctifying Faith

We have already been led into the second aspect of the believer's attitude that allows us to understand how the principles of moral realism and perfectionism interact to produce holiness, - faith. In sanctification - as in justification - repentance is joined with faith; and in each case it is "the free gift of God".⁵ It is also

1. Works vi, 99 "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations".

2. Ibid. v, 95 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".

3. Vide ibid. v, 51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. v, 164f. "The Repentance Of Believers".

4. Ibid. vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

5. Letters iv, 268, Oct. 12, 1764. Vide also Works viii, 5 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

"immediately" necessary to progressive sanctification as a "condition"¹ upon which the promise of perfection depends.

Sanctifying faith performs several functions. It is first a means of receiving a constant assurance of forgiveness, "... a continuing conviction that God for Christ's sake is merciful to me a sinner ..."² In this sense faith is a means of preserving the witness of the Spirit. This is indeed an important activity for such forgiveness bestows a sense of God's love, which, so far from inducing moral laxity, constrains the believer to love his Redeemer more sincerely. And he cannot love God without knowing that to be the kind of love on which God looks with favour, it must issue in love to his fellow men. Hence, the sense of pardon through faith issues in the holiness which fits man for communion with God. "God hath joined, from the beginning, pardon, holiness, heaven. And why should man put them asunder? O beware of this! Let not one link of the golden chain be broken".³ (We shall write of this at length presently.)

Secondly, faith is an attitude on the part of the believer, of confidence in the promise and power of God to make him perfect.⁴ It is a conviction that God intends him to enjoy the legitimate privilege of all Christian believers, salvation from sin and perfect love of God and man.⁵ (We shall discuss this at length in our next chapter.) Just as evangelical repentance refers directly to the reality of persistent sin, so faith refers directly to the reality of sanctifying grace. Faith as a trust in the promise of grace is clearly defined in the following.

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1. Vide Works vi, 49 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation," ibid. viii, 279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Ibid. vi, 36 "Satan's Devices".
 3. Ibid. vi, 41 "Satan's Devices".
 4. Vide ibid. vi, 52-3 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 5. Vide Letters iii, 380, Oct. 15, 1756.

We dare not believe
That God can deceive,
And never intend what He promised to give.
He hath said, From all sin
Ye here shall be clean,
All holy, all pure, all glorious within.
We rest on His word,
We shall here be restored
To His image; the servant shall be as his Lord.
Our faith is not vain,
We are sure to regain
The Nature Divine of the heavenly Man.
Then let us not stop,
But continue in hope,
Rejoicing till all in His image wake up;
His purity share,
His character bear,
And the truth of His hallowing promise declare.¹

The believer's confidence in the power of grace is inevitably heightened by a realization of his own impotence. Wesley writes:

"You are not able to contend with the evil world, much less with your own heart ... Cry, therefore, to the Strong for strength. Under a deep sense of your own weakness and helplessness, trust thou in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength!"²
"Believe that ... He is able to save you from all the sin that still remains in your heart ... It is true, this is impossible with man; but with God-Man all things are possible".³

Ultimately, faith in the promise and power of grace is reducible to simple trust that God's love is such as Christ has witnessed to man. The believer's attitude is summarized in the key phrase we have quoted before, "... a continual sense of his dependence on the Parent of all good ...", God.⁴ It is to be understood, however, that this is not a despairing trust; rather, it is a hopeful trust. For hope is an important element in faith. "We keep His ... promises, by hoping ..."⁵

A believer may expect to enjoy this faith continually, for it is given by God Himself as a means of allowing him to depend totally

1. Poetical Works v, 320

2. Works vi, 443 "Spiritual Idolatry".

3. Ibid. v, 165-66 "The Repentance Of Believers".

4. Letters ii, 376, Jan. 7, 1749. Vide also Works v, 257 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i".

5. Notes John 8:51.

on Him, and to yield up his soul to the sanctifying grace of which he constantly stands in need. As grace is given "from moment to moment", so the faith that apprehends this grace must always be operative. It is true, however, that at times faith grows dim and darkness settles on the soul. This is particularly true of the newly-born "babes in Christ".¹

C

The Interaction Of Repentance And Faith

We have, then, on the one hand, the believer's contrite acknowledgment of his wickedness; and on the other, his confidence in the power of grace to make him perfect. These exist simultaneously. Those pressing on to perfection "... are equally assured, that sin is in them, and that 'Christ is in them the hope of glory'".² The result is a tension between moral realism and perfectionism, between nature and grace, repentance and faith. Checking and balancing the sense of inbred sin is faith in divine grace. At the same time the conviction of sin destroys any false security in moral attainment. While the believer bows penitently under the weight of sin, the power of God lifts him up, sets his feet in the course laid before him, and inspires him to press on to the promise that claims him. The interrelation of repentance and faith is described by Wesley as follows:

"Thus it is, that in the children of God, repentance and faith exactly answer each other. By repentance we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions: By faith, we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts, and cleaning our hands. By repentance, we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words, and actions: By faith, we are conscious that our Advocate with the Father is continually

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1. Vide Works v,155 "On Sin In Believers", ibid. vi,80ff. "The Wilderness State", ibid. vi,488-89 "On Patience", ibid. vii,282 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Journal ii,329, Dec. 31,1739, ibid. ii,355, June 22,1740, Letters vii,64, May 26, 1781.
 2. Works v, 148 "On Sin In Believers".

pleading for us ... By repentance, we have an abiding conviction that there is no help in us: By faith, we receive not only mercy, 'but grace to help' in every 'time of need'. Repentance disclaims the very possibility of any other help: Faith accepts all the help we stand in need of, from Him ... Repentance says, 'Without him I can do nothing': Faith says, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me'.¹

This interaction is also conceived in a slightly different form as a tension between the moral law and Christ. For the law is continually operative in sanctification in order to beget repentance. The more the believer beholds the law's demand of perfect obedience, the more he beholds his sin. Indirectly, however, the law functions as a "grand means" of "larger communications of the life of God";² for the repentance it begets drives man back again and again on "faith in Christ", "opening all the treasures of his love".³ For "it is His atonement, and His Spirit carrying on 'the work of faith with power' in our hearts, that alone can sanctify us".⁴ Christ bears the same relation to the believer's faith as the moral law bears to repentance. Thus, through making the believer aware of the need of the mercy of Christ, the law is a means "... of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of his promises".⁵ The manner in which this tension is sustained is seen in the following:

"Therefore I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to him ... Indeed each is continually sending me to the other, - the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me 'above gold or precious stones'; seeing I know every part of it as

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1. Works v,168 "The Repentance Of Believers". Vide also ibid. v,96-7 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit", ibid. v,208-09 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid. viii, 298 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Ibid. v,443 "The Original, Nature, Use, And Property Of The Law".
 3. Ibid. v,464 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 4. Notes Heb. 2:10.
 5. Works v, 444 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law".

a gracious promise which my Lord will fulfil
in its season".¹

The attitude of faith and repentance is summarized by Wesley
in these lines:

Every moment, Lord, I want
The merit of thy death!

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Every moment, Lord, I have
The merit of thy death!²

D

The Tension Between Sin and Grace as Moral Struggle

This tension inevitably issues in a "continual warfare".³ The realization of the perfection to be attained, joined with an acknowledgment of sin, forbids the believer ever to halt in comp¹acent accomplishment. Indeed it is possible that the moral struggle will not abate but increase more and more until the promise of perfection is attained.⁴ Wesley warns the believer to beware of "spiritual sloth", to "stir himself up before the Lord", to "wrestle with God" for the conquest of his sinful nature.⁵ Also, Satan "... will not fail to try to the uttermost those whom he is not able to destroy".⁶

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1. Works v, 445 "The Original Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law".
Vide also ibid. v, 464-65 "The Law Established Through Faith", ibid. vi, 451 "On Dissipation". This tension is also spoken of as prevailing between "... the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbour ... we feel that we are not sufficient for these ... But we see a promise of God, to give us that love ... We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith ..." Works v, 313-14 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v". Vide also Letters iii, 81-2, Dec. 20, 1751.
 2. Quoted by Wesley in Works v, 167 "The Repentance Of Believers". In writing of the Methodist teaching on sanctification as found in Charles Wesley's hymns, L. Wiseman has pointed out that "the penitential hymns, of which there is a great number, touch the lowest depth of contrition and self-abasement. Joy in believing rises to the loftiest heights of ecstasy". A New History Of Methodism i, 248.
 3. Journal ii, 347, May, 17, 1740. Vide also Works v, 91 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".
 4. Vide Letters vii, 33, Sept. 18, 1780.
 5. Works vi, 87-8 "The Wilderness State".
 6. Ibid. v, 428 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii".

In fact, Wesley devotes an entire sermon to "The Devices of Satan" by which the evil one attempts to destroy or hinder the work of God in the soul.¹ Elsewhere the struggle is pictured as carried on between those who are of the Spirit of God, and those who are of the "Spirit of the world".² Hence, the believer must rely utterly on the power which assist him "from on high" to trample continually under foot the assaults of the devil, to "crucify the flesh".³ He must "... agonize continually 'to enter in at the straight gate', to 'strive for the mastery', and 'take the kingdom of heaven by violence'. There needs no more than not to fight, and we are sure to be conquered".⁴

It must be admitted, however, that most men are not always able to wage the moral war with such valiance that they will conquer. This is especially likely to happen when the flood of justifying grace, acting "almost irresistibly", subsides; "... and the higher the flood, the lower will be the ebb..."⁵ If the believer does not struggle as if he were on trial for his life, he will "fall away".⁶ He is usually warned of this peril by a certain "heaviness"⁷ of soul, a sorrowful depression that arises from the temptations that assail him, or from the irritations and misfortunes of common life that make trial of his faith. Almost every one undergoes such heaviness, however, and it is not blameworthy in the same sense as "darkness" of soul. "Darkness" is a term used to denote a more serious and dangerous decay of the believer's holiness, which if not immediately checked will lead to "backsliding".⁸ "Darkness" is usually ~~occas-~~

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1. Vide Works vi, 32ff. Vide also ibid. vi, 479f. "On Temptation", Letters vi, 27, May 23, 1773.
 2. Vide Works v, 288 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iii".
 3. Vide ibid. v, 88 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".
 4. Ibid. vi, 83 "The Wilderness State".
 5. Journal vii, 67, Apr. 6, 1785
 6. Ibid. vii, 75, May 6, 1785.
 7. Vide Works vi, 91ff. "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations", ibid. vi, 486 "On Patience", Letters v, 303, Feb. 5, 1772.
 8. Vide Works vi, 77ff. "The Wilderness State", Notes John 16:22. For references to Wesley's own moods of spiritual depression, vide Letter i, 269, Nov. 22, 1738, ibid. v, 16, June 27, 1776, Journal ii, 91, Oct. 14, 1738.

ioned by some actual sin and differs from "heaviness" in that it is suppressible by the believer himself (involving his own will, hence sinful,); whereas heaviness is beyond his control.¹ Any act of overt sin is always due to the believer. No matter how sorrowful he be, God never deserts him nor fails to provide the grace necessary to persevere in holiness: "... it is we only that desert him".² It is to be understood, however, that the believer can feel the reality of inward sin remaining and at the same time be in God's favour. But he cannot commit an outward act of sin and at that moment retain his faith. "Having sin does not forfeit the favour of God; giving way to sin does".³ In sanctification—as throughout Wesley's theology - sin consists in a dissipation of the soul from God, through voluntary transgression of one or more of His known laws. But as God dwells immanently in the believer, sin is particularly a grieving of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Yet if man should fall away, the infinite mercy of God proffers forgiveness. The Lord's compassions fail not and He is able to heal all back-sliding. He asks only that the sinner approach anew the throne of grace with a contrite heart and broken spirit, bearing as his only offering a penitent knowledge of himself and a trust in God as alone able to forgive and renew.⁵ Let all men, however, take heed that they not become as salt that hath lost its savour, total apostates, whose hearts are hardened by sin. For if they thus sin wilfully and frequently after they have known God's saving love, "...

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1. Vide Letters vi,111, Sept 13,1774, Works vi,102, "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations".
 2. Works vi,80 "The Wilderness State".
 3. Ibid. v,155 "On Sin In Believers".
 4. Vide ibid.v,228ff. "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God", ibid.vii,486ff. "On Grieving The Holy Spirit", ibid.vii,283 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 5. Vide ibid. vi,336 "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels".

there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful
looking for of judgment and ^{of} fiery indignation ..."¹

The warfare that ~~issues~~ from the tension between faith and repentance, however, is not an anarchy of the soul. Although the vast disparity between his sinful self and the life of perfect holiness constantly troubles the believer, it should not drive him to hopeless
²despair. God does indeed desire that he fight the good fight with all energy and resolution. But sustaining him in the struggle is the direct witness of the Spirit that he is accepted and beloved by God.³ Even when the ethical vigour of his life sinks so low as to cloud the indirect witness, when heaviness or darkness descends upon him, the personal voice of the Spirit reassures him. Nothing is so calculated to preserve him in the course set before him as the rejoicing consciousness that God looks upon him as a beloved son. Furthermore, always checking the knowledge of inbred sin is a hopeful confidence in the promise of grace. For "... God may increase the knowledge of ourselves to any degree, and increase, in the same proportion, the knowledge of Himself and the experience of His love".⁴ Thus the work of God in the heart is most effectually carried on not by anguish or despair, "spiritual martyrdoms".⁵ Some Mystics falsely teach this. They suppose "... that they are not always to walk in luminous faith; that this is only a lower dispensation ... that a state of light and joy is good, but a state of darkness and dryness is better ... that, therefore, we ought neither to expect nor desire

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1. Works v,301 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv". Vide also ibid. vi,514ff. "A Call To Backsliders".
 2. Vide ibid. vi,36 "Satan's Devices".
 3. Vide ibid. v,205-06 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. v,258-59 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i", ibid. viii,297-98 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Letters iv,85-6, Mar.4,1760.
 4. Works vi,99 "Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations".
 5. Ibid. vi,90 "The Wilderness State". Vide also ibid. vi,514f. "A Call To Backsliders", ibid. vii,191 "On Conscience".

to walk in the light always"¹. But this is pernicious counsel. It is wrong as well as absurd to believe that the absence of God best perfects a believer's communion with Him. The legitimate privilege of a child of God, even amidst the struggle with sin, is tranquillity and joy in the Holy Spirit.

"So shall the sense of sinfulness you feel, on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect, on the other, both contribute to establish your peace, and to make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain in the day when the Lord cometh to take full possession of your heart".²

The tension between nature and grace promotes growth at the same time that it issues in moral war. In fact, the more acute the tension, the more productive it is of holiness.³ Hence, sanctification is defined as a "growth in grace"⁴ which begins at justification and issues in Christian perfection. Wesley uses the phrases, "growing more heavenly minded",⁵ going "on from grace to grace",⁶ "successive conquests of grace",⁷ etc., to describe this character. According to the degree of their holiness, believers are spoken of as "little children", "young men" and "fathers" in Christ.⁸ In every stage of sanctification all are utterly dependent on God, Whose grace, if received and improved, will never fail, but which if not used will infallibly be taken away.⁹

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1. Works vi, 84 "The Wilderness State". Wesley believes that Catholicism is especially given to this. He adds: "Hence it is, (though other reasons may concur,) that the main body of pious men in the Romish Church generally walk in a dark uncomfortable way, and if ever they receive soon lose the light of God". Vide also Letters iii, 361, Jan. 6, 1756, ibid. v, 196, Aug. 11, 1770.
 2. Works vi, 40 "Satan's Devices".
 3. Vide ibid. v, 257-58 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i".
 4. Ibid. xiv, 276 "Preface To An Extract From The Life Of Madame Guion".
 5. Ibid. vii, 22 "On Dress".
 6. Ibid. vi, 46 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", Vide also ibid. vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. viii, 65f. "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. viii, 279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 7. Ibid. xiv, 323 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems" (1740).
 8. Vide ibid. vi, 488 "On Patience", Letters iii, 360, Jan. 6, 1756.
 9. Vide Works vii, 41 "An Israelite Indeed".

IV

Sanctification as Love of God

The believer's dealing with the sin remaining in him is but one aspect of the holiness which fits him for communion with God. It is essentially a negative feature¹ of the state of progressive sanctification, subordinate to Wesley's profounder conception of sanctification as an increase in a disposition and practice of Christian love. A believer is asked not only to subdue inbred sin with the help of divine grace. He is above all asked to love God with all his being, and his neighbour as himself. He must see that the essence of communion with his Father is love, that the purpose of his life is to love God and enjoy Him forever.

Accordingly we find Wesley writing, simply, that "love is the sum of Christian sanctification ...";² "love is holiness wherever it exists".³ One can hardly turn a page of his works without finding this basic conviction expressed or implied. One of his best definitions of sanctification is the following:

Sanctification "...we conceive to be no other than love; the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God 'with all our heart, and soul, and strength', as having 'first loved us', as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is,⁴ there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand".

This love is rooted in God. It is not a self-cultivated disposition on the part of man but is founded "...in God, the great ocean

1. Vide Works vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

2. Ibid. vi, 488 "On Patience".

3. Ibid. ix, 292 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

4. Ibid. viii, 474 "The Principles Of A Methodist". Vide also Letters ii, 270, June 17, 1746, Notes Mark 12:30, 33.

of love".¹ This is true, first, in the sense that every degree of sanctifying love springs "... solely and wholly from the almighty grace of God, which alone worketh all ..."² Love is ultimately founded in God, secondly, in the sense that it arises from an experience of God's love for man's soul. The constraint of divine love evokes our response of human love. For love is "... the sole end, of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things".³ This love has been dispensed first in the creation of man. The believer has most poignantly experienced it in justification, when he came to know its depth and quality in the atonement of Christ. Then the infinitude of the divine mercy swept over his soul. Then he came to realize how unspeakably God loved him. And out of the knowledge that he owes the creation and redemption of his soul to the claiming love of God, arises his response of love. In this deep sense, therefore, Wesley writes that true religion is gratitude to our Creator and Redeemer for His having first loved us, and in consequence, benevolence to our fellow men.⁴ It is impossible to know that God has made us and forgivingly redeemed us without acknowledging His claim on "... all we are or have", on "all our love and obedience".⁵ Indeed, Wesley would agree that the two texts", "we love Him because He first loved us", and, "the love of Christ constraineth us",⁶ comprise "the sum of the whole gospel".⁷ This fundamental point is seen in the following quotation.

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1. Works v,463 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 2. Letters v,7, Apr. 1, 1766. Vide also Notes I Cor. 1:30.
 3. Works v,462 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 4. Vide ibid. v,465 "The Law Established Through Faith", ibid. viii,78 "On Family Religion", ibid. vii,267,269f. "The Unity Of The Divine Being", Letters ii, 38f., July, 1745.
 5. Works vii,338 "On The Deceitfulness Of The Human Heart".
 6. I John 4:9.
 7. II Cor. 5:14. Vide Works viii,283 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 8. Works vi,187 "Preface To Sermons". Vide also Notes I John 4:19.

"For there is no motive which so powerfully inclines us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this to give our hearts to Him who was given for us". ¹

In the heart of the believer, love of God is conceived as a certain quality of inwardliness, ² "a right disposition", a "principle within, seated in the inmost soul". ³ Wesley uses the following phrases to describe the Christian's offering up his being to God as his humble way of reciprocally loving Him who first loved us: "the vital, spiritual worship of God", ⁴ "a principle of universal holiness", ⁵ "the circumcision of the heart", ⁶ "the mind of Christ", "the image of God", ⁷ "faith working by love", "walking as Christ walked". These are all intended to emphasize the character of love as a spiritual principle in ⁸ "the hidden man of the heart". Wesley is vitally concerned to distinguish between love as the inward quality of which St. Paul writes in I Cor. 13, and as manifest in outward actions. The latter differs from the former as effects do from causes. Many people do not understand this and mistake church attendance, holding orthodox opinions or decency of behaviour, for genuine love of God. Wesley impatiently puts these down as "formality", as "hellish harmlessness" and ⁹ "heathen morality". ¹⁰ They are all "mean pageantry".

1. Works v, 465 "The Law Established Through Faith".
2. Ibid. ix, 293 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".
3. Ibid. ix, 174 "A Short Address To The Inhabitants Of Ireland".
4. Notes Titus 1:1. Vide also ibid. I Tim. 2:2.
5. Ibid. I Cor. 1:30.
6. Vide Works v, 202 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
7. Vide ibid. v, 267 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ii", ibid. vii, 316f. "On The Wedding Garment".
8. Ibid. v, 78 "The Way To The Kingdom".
9. Ibid. vii, 263 "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith". Vide also ibid. v, 77f. "The Way To The Kingdom", ibid. v, 322ff. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v", ibid. v, 429-30 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii", ibid. vii, 316 "On The Wedding Garment".
10. Letters ii, 386, Jan. 7, 1749.

In reality, love should reign on the inmost throne of man's soul. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers; in circles farther removed are works of piety and mercy; and in the circle most removed is membership in a church.¹

The believer's response to the claim of God takes the form of a feeling of stewardship.² He understands that he is responsible to God for all that he is, has and does, in the same manner that a steward is responsible to his master. He perceives that by right of creation and purchase God is the proprietor, and he but the steward of all that pertains to him.³ His body, mind and will all constitute a trust to be administered in accord with God's will. Hence, obedience to the divine will is another way of describing the love which the believer offers up to God. God's will is "the supreme, unalterable rule"⁴ for all his conduct; his love of God is at its height when his will is identified with God's, when but one desire governs his life, to do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. It must be made clear, however, that such obedience is liberty as well as service. Although the believer chooses to live according to the will of another, he delights to do so. The claim of love is not force. It is a con-

1. Vide Works vii, 60ff. "On Zeal".

2. Vide ibid. vi, 136ff. "The Good Steward", ibid. vi, 36f. "The More Excellent Way", ibid. vi, 133f. "The Use Of Money".

3. This idea runs all through Wesley's sermons that deal with the practical nature of sanctification. One finds it interestingly illustrated in a sermon entitled "On Redeeming The Time", which consists in an exhortation to take only as much sleep as nature demands. One's time is not one's own to be used carelessly. (Vide Works vi, 67ff.) Similarly, Wesley asks Christians to look upon their servants and family as committed to their charge by God, for whom they must some day give account. Vide ibid. vii, 79ff. "On Family Religion".

4. Ibid. vi, 107. "Self-Denial". Vide also ibid. v, 381-82 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix", ibid. viii, 344f. "The Character Of A Methodist".

straint that respects the integrity of man's soul, that asks the service of man's understanding and will only in order to sanctify and enlighten them, that man's soul may be brought more intimately into communion with its Redeemer.¹ "...His will is our sanctification".²

V

Sanctification as Love of Man

The obedient love of God that Wesley urges on the believer as the purpose of his life, issues in ethical love to his fellow men. The holiness without which no man can see the Lord is an ethical holiness. "It is most true, that the root of religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul; that this is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart,³ it cannot but put forth branches". Man worships God and communes with Him in the practice of ethical love as fully and rewardingly as through the progressive conquest of sin. Indeed, the two are inseparably necessary to the quality of holiness that fits him for life with God. If the believer's experience of the love with which God has loved him in Christ be genuine, according to the depth of his experience he is compelled to love every man. "If we love Him, we cannot but love one another, as Christ loved us".⁴ The quality of the believer's ethical love is of the same quality as the love with which he has been redeemed. The love of "the Father of the spirits of all flesh", "the love of Christ constraineth" him.⁵ The following is probably Wesley's best definition of the ethical love of a Christian:

"above all, remembering that God is love, he is...

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1. Vide Works vi, 280 "The General Spread Of The Gospel".
 2. Letters i, 219, Mar. 29, 1737. Vide also Works m, 337 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-vi", ibid. xiv, 271f. "Preface To A Collection Of Forms Of Prayer (1775)", Notes Matt. 16:23-4.
 3. Works v, 303-04 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv".
 4. Ibid. vii, 78 "On Family Religion".
 5. Vide ibid. viii, 343 "The Character Of A Methodist".

full of love to his neighbour, of universal love, not confined to ... those only that love him or that are endeared to him ... But his love resembles that of Him whose mercy is over all His works. It soars above all scanty bounds, embracing neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies - yea, not only the good and gentle, but also the forward, the evil and unthankful. For he loves every soul that God has made; every child of man ... His love ... is in itself generous and disinterested; springing from no view of advantage to himself, from no regard to profit or praise - no, nor even the pleasure of loving. This is the daughter, not the parent, of his affection. By experience he knows that social love, if it means the love of our neighbour, is absolutely different from self-love, even of the most allowable kind ... And this universal, disinterested love is productive of all right affections ... It makes a Christian rejoice in the virtues of all, and bear a part in their happiness, at the same time he sympathizes with their pains and compassionates their infirmities ... It begets candour, and willingness to believe, and hope whatever is kind and friendly of every man, and invincible patience, never overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good ... This same love is productive of all right actions ... It prevents his willingly hurting or grieving any man. It guides him into an uniform practice of justice and mercy ... It constrains him to do all possible good of every possible kind to all men; and makes him resolved in every circumstance to do that, and that only, to others which, supposing he were himself in the same situation, he would desire they should do to him".¹

It is to be observed that moral love must be rooted in the supernatural knowledge and love of God. It must be firmly " ... fixed on its right foundation, namely, the love of God springing from faith, from a full conviction that God hath given his only Son to die for my sins ..." For "from this truth believed, from this blessing enjoyed, the love of our brethren takes its rise ..." Wesley is unwaveringly hostile toward those who reduce Christianity to a system of morality, who " ... extol humanity to the skies, as the very essence of religion". He speaks of those who deny that

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1. Letters ii, 376-78, Jan. 7, 1749.
 2. Works vii, 45 "An Israelite Indeed".
 3. Notes I John 3:16.
 4. Works vii, 271 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".

revelation is the foundation of ethics, as interpreting the gospel so as to place the holiness by which men are saved in " ... things really within themselves ... not more than human".¹ Such are the " ... great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume", who "have contributed all their labours, sparing no pains to establish a religion which shall stand on its own foundation, independent of any revelation whatever ...";² "Mr. Woolaston", whose " ... elaborate work, The Religion of Nature Delineated, presents us with a complete system of religion, without anything of God about it ...";³ and "Prof. Hutcheson of Glasgow", whose "beautiful essay" on the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue is " ... a decent, and therefore more dangerous, attack upon the whole Christian revelation".⁴ Wesley's impatience with these thinkers arises from the conviction that they have perverted religion into a humanist system of morality by removing its foundation, the revelation of God's love into the world in the person of Jesus Christ who claims man's grateful love in return. If ethical holiness be conceived as something "not more than human", if it be divorced from the compulsion of divine love, it becomes but "heathen morality", which, so far from being true benevolence, because it springs not from faith is sin.⁵ Wesley puts the gist of his criticism in these words:

"Men hereby wilfully and designedly put asunder what God has joined, -- the duties of the first and the second table. It is separating the love of our neighbour from the love of God. It is a plausible way of thrusting God out of the world he has made".⁶

In short, to Wesley it is **atheism**.

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1. Works vii, 509 "On The Holy Spirit". Italics mine.
 2. Ibid. vii, 271 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 3. Ibid. vii, 270 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".
 4. Ibid. vii, 37-8 "An Israelite Indeed". Vide also ibid. vii, 188-89 "On Conscience".
 5. Vide ibid. viii, 188 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 6. Ibid. vii, 271 "The Unity Of The Divine Being".

Hence he unsparingly insists that true religion is " ... perfection by inspiration; in other words, the obedient love of God, by the supernatural knowledge of God ..."¹ One cannot effectively inspire holiness by "painting the beauty of virtue" and "the deformity of vice".² Those who ground morality "... in themselves; in reason, in philosophy", will find that these are but "broken reeds, bubbles, smoke!" "There is, therefore, an absolute necessity, if ever we would conquer vice, or steadily persevere in the practice of virtue, to have arms of a better kind than these; otherwise, we may see what is right, but we cannot attain it".³ If love is to be ethically effective, it must be rooted in an initial experience of God's love through salvation by faith in Christ, and through a continual experience of the Holy Spirit of love. Knowing the nature of God's love for him, man " ... obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle; namely, the grace of God ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love".⁴ Such love, "the strongest of all motives",⁵ is constantly communicated by the Spirit which inspires the believer to ethical love, even, we recall, as it provides him with the power to conquer the sin remaining in him. Wesley accordingly writes that "... the love of God ... must be felt (if it is in the soul) as much as fire upon the body".⁶ The Spirit is likewise the source of light to man's conscience. Wesley will not speak of the conscience as "natural". For it is the Spirit, " ... not nature", which "'hath showed thee, O man, what is good'".⁷ The activity of the conscience springs from the influence of the Spirit in the same way that all man's ethical activity issues/ a from

1. Vide Works viii, 188 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

2. Ibid. vi, 267 "The End Of Christ's Coming".

3. Ibid. vi, 268 "The End Of Christ's Coming".

4. Ibid. v, 445 "The Law Established Through Faith".

5. Ibid. viii, 284 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

6. Letters ii, 23, June, 1744.

7. Works vii, 188 "On Conscience".

sense of divine love. For these reasons Wesley insists that all ethical religion which does not spring from, and is not maintained by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, is false; that it must derive from an experience of "the energy of God"¹ in one's heart. Wesley asks:

"What think you of this? Do you not stagger? Dare you carry the inward principle so far? Do you acknowledge it to be the very truth? ... Hast thou the continual inspiration of his Spirit, filling thy heart with his love, as with a well of water, springing up into everlasting life?"²

i

Love, the Crown of Faith

The truth that love of God must issue in love of man is cast into two doctrinal forms in Wesley's theology. First, love is the crown of faith. The necessity of enforcing this truth was made especially pertinent by Antinomian abuses that followed upon Wesley's doctrine of justification. It is noteworthy that he defines "the marrow of Antinomianism" as "the imagination that faith supersedes holiness",³ "that grand pest of Christianity".⁴ He perceived that the perils attendant on the doctrine of justification by faith "in all ages"⁵ were also a reality for him. We have already discussed this point.⁶

Wesley summarizes his conviction that the issue of justification by faith is sanctification, in the words: "The foundation is faith; the end, love".⁷ Faith is indeed the "corner stone",

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1. Works vii, 316 "On The Wedding Garment".
 2. Ibid. viii, 188 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Ibid. vii, 317 "On The Wedding Garment".
 4. Ibid. vi, 259 "The Mystery of Iniquity".
 5. Ibid. v, 448 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 6. Vide supra pp. 154-56.
 7. Notes I Tim. 1:5.

"... the root of all, of present as well as future salvation".¹

The first message of the gospel is, "Repent and believe", "By grace are ye saved through faith". Ultimately, however, faith is but a "means only".² As "glorious" and as "honourable" as it is, it is not the end of Christian salvation. It is but the "hand-maid"³ of love. For, God is love. As love is the crown of faith, so has it existed long before it in God, the "great ocean of love". Faith was only instituted in Paradise to re-establish communion between man and God after man had first sinned. Accordingly, faith is but a "temporary" means for the apprehension of divine love, which in turn constrains man to practise ethical love. Thus the flower of religion, the purpose and authentication of salvation by faith, are ethical love. "Here is, what must always be, the main question".⁴ Although there can indeed be no righteousness (strictly speaking) before faith, yet righteousness must issue from faith. The Pauline doctrine of justification does indeed teach that faith is imputed for righteousness at the time of justification. But it does not teach that it is imputed for "subsequent righteousness".⁵

"... we must take care to let all man know, we esteem no faith but that which worketh by love ... And when we say, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved'; we do not mean, 'Believe, and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness; but, 'Believe and thou shalt be holy ...'".⁶
 "This is as certain a truth as any that is delivered in the whole oracles of God".⁷

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1. Works v, 404 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - x". Vide also ibid. v, 453 ff. "The Law Established Through Faith".
 2. Letters ii, 75, June 25, 1746.
 3. Works v, 462 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 4. Letters ii, 135-36, Mar. 22, 1748.
 5. Vide Works v, 454 "The Law Established Through Faith".
 6. Ibid. v, 318 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - v". Vide also ibid. v, 237 ff. "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. v, 344-45 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount - vii", ibid. vii, 47, 51, 54, 56 "On Charity", ibid. viii, 279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. xi, 416 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Notes Jas. 2:22.
 7. Works vii, 54 "On Charity".

The Law Established Through Faith

The truth that love of God must issue in love of one's fellow men, is formulated, secondly, in the doctrine that obedience to the moral law is the fruit of faith, the sum of Christian ethics; that such obedience constitutes the personal holiness necessary to salvation. By the moral law Wesley means the commands comprised in the Sermon on the Mount, and that part of the commandment upon which hang the Law and the Prophets, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".¹ Wesley of course agrees that Christ's atonement has put an end to the Mosaic law. But the moral law, the "copy of the eternal mind", the "transcript of the divine nature",² the "visible beauty of the Most High",³ is a final dispensation made by God which is to endure till the consummation of all things. "'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but this word 'shall not pass away'".³ The moral law is an integral part of the Christian revelation and forever exerts a claim of obedience on the believer. So far from being made void, it is most fully established through faith. For one cannot be genuinely justified by faith without finding that the love that redeems man, in turn constrains him to practise ethical love unto his fellow men in accord with the principles laid down in the moral law in the New Testament.

The moral law is also established in the sense that sanctifying faith allows the believer to lay hold on the grace he constantly needs in order to perform the obedience the law demands. Faith not only apprehends grace to conquer the sin laid bare by the law's perfection (of which we have written in a previous section of this chapter); it also provides power to practise the ethical

1. Mark 12:31. Vide Letters iii, 79, Dec. 20, 1751.
 2. Works v, 439 "The Original, Nature, Property, And Use Of The Law".
 3. Ibid. v, 314 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-v". Vide also Notes I Cor. 9:21.

love the law enjoins. While the law reveals the believer's failures and begets the repentance necessary to holiness, faith inspires him by mediating the promise to which he is pressing and by conferring the power to achieve it.

iii

Love in Human Conduct

We conclude our chapter on sanctification with a brief discussion of Wesley's conception of the manner in which ^{the}love we have described determines the believer's conduct in the world in which he lives.

This conception is rooted in a view of Christianity as essentially a "social" and not a "solitary" religion. "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness".¹ To make Christianity a contemplative or "solitary" religion is to destroy it. This is Wesley's main objection to mysticism.² Despite his insistence that an individual experience of salvation is the mark of a Christian, he no less vigorously asserts that it will not "... suffice to worship God, who is a Spirit, with the spirit of our minds ..."³, retiring from an active participation in the world. Wesley's ethic is not a world-desertion one. For man truly loves God through

"... the keeping his outward commandments. To glorify him, therefore, with our bodies, as well as with our spirits; to go through outward work with our hearts lifted up to him; to make our daily employment a sacrifice to God; to buy and sell, to eat and drink,

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1. Works xiv, 321 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems (1739)".
 2. Vide Letters vi, 43-4, Sept. 19, 1773, Works v, 296ff. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv", ibid. xiv, 320-22, "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems (1739)".
 3. Works v, 295 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv".

to his glory; -- this is worshipping God in spirit and in truth, as much as praying to him in a wilderness ...

Thou, O Lord, in tender love
Dost all my burdens bear;
Lift my heart to things above,
And fix it ever there.
Calm on tumult's wheel I sit;
Midst busy multitudes alone;
Sweetly waiting at thy feet,
Till all thy will be done".¹

The Christian must indeed beware of a seductive "friendship with the world". This is a peril. There is, however, a principle by which he may determine whether or not his conduct in the world is such as to make for that holiness without which he cannot dwell with God. This principle is rooted in the doctrine of man's love of God as the stewardship of himself and of all that pertains to him. It is: "Love the creature as it leads to the Creator"; "have no end, no ultimate end, but God".² Clearly this does not forbid man's loving anything on this earth. Nor does it deny him the legitimate pleasures of life. For God has "... inseparably annexed pleasure to those creatures which are necessary to sustain the life he has given us".³ It does, however, establish a practical rule for participation in the world of creatures at the same time that it nourishes an activist, affirmative attitude toward life. When confronted with a difficult decision, the Christian may ask

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1. Works v, 306 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv".
 2. Ibid. v, 207-08 "The Circumcision Of The Heart". Vide also ibid. v. 384f. "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-ix", ibid. vi, 450 "On Dissipation", ibid. vii, 222 "On Riches".
 3. Ibid. v, 207 "The Circumcision Of The Heart". Vide also Letters I, 219, Mar. 29, 1737. In terms of this principle, "Christian temperance" is defined as "... the voluntary abstaining from all pleasure which does not lead us to God ... 'It is using the world', so to use all outward, and so to restrain all inward things, that they may become a means of what is spiritual; a scaling ladder to ascend to what is above. Intemperance is to abuse the world. He that uses anything below, looking no higher, and getting no farther, is intemperate". Notes II Pet. 1:6.

himself: Does what I am about to do, does this thing to which I am about to give myself strengthen or weaken my sense of God? Does it distract my being from Him?

One may select from Wesley's works several illustrations of this principle. All learning, for example, is to be considered valuable only in so far as it leads man to God. The one end of all study is a knowledge and love of God and of His Son. Without this attitude of " ... love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit"¹. For " ... truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight"². Similarly, "riches" are condemned because their possessor comes to love them more than God. As a violation of the principle of loving the creature more than the Creator, the love of wealth is stigmatized as "spiritual idolatry",³ "spiritual adultery".⁴ Wesley is relentless in driving home this point. At least six⁵ sermons are devoted to the Christian's attitude toward money. Another illustration is found in the sermon entitled "Wandering Thoughts",⁶ which describes the kinds of distractions to which the human mind is liable; and which exhorts the believer to compose his soul before God, to pray for deliverance from all things that impair a constant communion with God.

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1. Works v, 49 "Scriptural Christianity". Vide also ibid. vii, 354 "On Living Without God".
 2. Ibid. vii, 45 "On Charity".
 3. Ibid. vi, 435 "Spiritual Idolatry".
 4. Ibid. vi, 463 "On Friendship With The World". Vide also ibid. vi, 333, "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels".
 5. Wesley's rule for the disposition of wealth is: Gain all you can without injuring your neighbour's life or your own; save all you can; give all you can, after making reasonable provision for your own needs and those of your dependents. Vide Works vi, 124ff. "The Use Of Money" ibid. vii, 1ff. "The Danger Of Riches", ibid. vii, 214ff. "On Riches", ibid. vii, 244ff. "Dives And Lazarus", ibid. vii, 305ff. "On Wordly Folly", ibid. 354ff. "On The Danger Of Increasing Riches", ibid. vi, 33ff. "The Wisdom Of God's Counsels", ibid. vii, 285ff. "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity".
 6. Vide ibid. vi, 23ff.

Man's love of God, therefore, does not remove him from the world. On the contrary, the claim of love to which he responds casts a light that lays bare the true values of all creatures with which he has to do. It reveals them as valuable only in so far as they contribute to "the life of God in the soul of man"¹ when disposed of according to the divine will.

As a social religion, Christianity finds its highest expression in the believer's ethical love to his fellow men. His attitude to the world is most faithful to the gospel whose redeeming character he has known in his own salvation, when he shows forth the love with which Christ has loved him in ethical love to those about him. There are two principles that determine his behaviour toward his fellow men. The first is: "Thou shalt love ~~thy~~² neighbour as thyself". Wesley speaks of this as the "royal law", the "golden rule of mercy". When rightly understood, it "... comprises the whole of that religion which our Lord came to establish upon earth"³. The word "neighbour" signifies "every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made"⁴. "As thyself" suggests that the Christian is to covet for his fellow men the blessedness that is the purpose of all human life. He is to leave nothing undone that will assist them to respond to the claim of divine love which God has pronounced on all men in creating and redeeming them. The Christian ministers to the souls and bodies of men in order to bring them to the same eternal love and enjoyment of God that fulfils the purpose of his own being.

Bound up with the golden rule is another principle that determines the ethical conduct of the Christian believer in the

1. Journal ii, 90, Oct. 14, 1738.

2. Mark 12:31.

3. Works v, 403 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-x".

4. Ibid. v, 79 "The Way To The Kingdom". Vide also Letters ii, 377, Jan. 7, 1749.

world of men. This principle in one sense is derivative from the former. It is: reverence the soul of every man as a divine and precious thing. We remember from the doctrine of man that the human soul is "the offspring of God", that it has been created for ~~fellowship~~ with God. It has been further endeared to its Creator by the sacrifice He has made of His Son for its redemption. Accordingly, the Christian loves not only because of the sheer constraint of the love with which he has been loved in Christ; nor only from a sense of obligation to the moral law. He also loves from a desire to "honour all men" as "immortal spirits", "bought" by God's Son, "designed for His kingdom",¹ and as such, infinitely valuable in God's sight. Because every soul is of divine worth, it is to be treasured, served and loved. Wesley writes:

"A poor wretch cries to me for alms: I look, and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity. I honour him for his Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore, which I feel and show toward him is a mixture of the honour and love which I bear to the offspring of God; the

1. Notes I Pet. 2:17. Vide also ibid. Jas. 3:9.

purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality". 1

The manner in which Wesley applies these principles to the practical conduct of human life is most clearly seen in his thirteen discourses upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and in four sermons on the danger of rending void the moral law through faith.² These are not only an excellent practical guide to conduct. They indicate at the same time the structural place in Wesley's theology the conception of Christianity as an ethical religion holds. The practical principles in terms of which he applies Christian love to social life are those laid down by St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians.³ It is

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1. Works vii, 145-46 "On Pleasing All Men". Vide also ibid. vi, 243 "The General Deliverance", Letters vi, 206-07, Feb. 7, 1776, ibid. vi, 208-09, Feb. 26, 1776.
 2. Vide Works v, 234-466. These are in addition to other sermons devoted to an exposition of the way in which the law of love is variously applied, and in addition to numerous other places where Wesley incidentally treats of Christian ethics. Vide Works v, 479ff. "A Caution Against Bigotry", ibid. v, 492ff. "A Catholic Spirit", ibid. vi, 103ff. "Self-Denial", ibid. vi, 114ff. "The Cure Of Evil-Speaking", ibid. vi, 124ff., "The Use Of Money", ibid. vi, 136ff. "The Good Steward", ibid. vi, 149ff. "The Reformation Of Manners", ibid. vi, 296ff. "The Duty Of Reproving Our Neighbour", ibid. vi, 432f. "Spiritual Worship", ibid. vi, 435ff. "Spiritual Idolatry", ibid. vi, 444ff. "On Dissipation", ibid. vi, 452ff. "On Friendship With The World", ibid. vi, 464 "In What Sense We Are To Leave The World", ibid. vi, 493ff. "The Important Question", ibid. vii, 1ff. "The Danger Of Riches", ibid. vii, 15ff. "On Dress", ibid. vii, 26ff. "The More Excellent Way", ibid. vii, 45ff. "On Charity", ibid. vii, 57ff. "On Zeal", ibid. vii, 67ff. "On Redeeming The Time", ibid. vii, 76ff. "On Family Religion", ibid. vii, 86ff. "On The Education Of Children", ibid. vii, 98ff. "On Obedience To Parents", ibid. vii, 108ff. "On Obedience To Pastors", ibid. vii, 117ff. "On Visiting The Sick", ibid. vii, 174ff. "On Attending The Church Service", ibid. vii, 214ff. "On Riches", ibid. vii, 281ff. "Causes Of The Inefficacy Of Christianity", ibid. vii, 297ff. "On A Single Eye", ibid. vii, 305ff. "On Worldly Folly", ibid. vii, 355ff. "On The Danger Of Increasing Riches", ibid. vii, 492ff. "On Love", ibid. vii, 500ff. "On Public Diversions", ibid. vii, 400ff. "National Sins And Miseries".
 3. Vide ibid. v, 211-12 "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vii, 45ff. "On Charity", ibid. vii, 492ff. "On Love".

not necessary to record the content of these sermons in detail.

We may say, however, that they cannot be read without acknowledging that one who so strenuously applies ethical love to human life as Wesley, can never be accused of preaching an experience of salvation that tolerates moral shallowness. Wesley's exposition of the practical application of Christian love to human conduct is devastating.

Chapter VII

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

I

Introduction

In the mind of Wesley, Christian perfection appears to bear three aspects. It is conceived, first, as having its origin in the growth in grace treated in the previous chapter as progressive sanctification. Secondly, it is conceived as an instantaneous act on the part of God in which the reality of sin is extinguished and the soul of man is filled with love. Thirdly, perfection is a quality of life subsequent to, and characterized by certain consequences of that act, namely, a freedom from sin and a disposition and practice of Christian love. These three aspects are integrally connected and within the believer's experience merge into one another. For purposes of exposition, however, we treat them separately, and first examine the relation of Christian perfection to progressive sanctification.

II

The Relation of Perfection to Progressive Sanctification

It has become apparent from our study of Wesley's soteriology that communion with God is the goal of salvation. To love God and enjoy Him forever is the purpose of man's creation, redemption and sanctification. This has been seen to underlie all Wesley's doctrines either explicitly or implicitly. The drama of salvation culminates in a restoration of man to fellowship with God in purity and love. Particularly, the conquest of sin and cultivation of love in sanctification have their motive and meaning in a confidence that divine grace will achieve the holiness that allows the believer to dwellⁱⁿ uninterrupted communion with God. Throughout the attainments and

failures of the growth of grace there abides the promise that man shall be perfect even as his Creator and Redeemer is perfect. For the commands of the Christian gospel/^{are}promises, we remember; it is the joyful knowledge of this truth that claims and inspires the believer's soul. Yet, communion with God is a promise whose realization is conditional upon the believer's effort; a certain responsibility is laid on man to co-operate with the love that is constantly saying to him, "My son, give me thine heart". The conjunction of man's activity with God's issues in the increasing holiness, which, wrought through renewed repentance and faith, manifest in the disposition and practice of love, progressively fits man for life with God.

Accordingly, one of Wesley's definitions of Christian perfection is "entire sanctification".¹ Moreover, because sanctification is organic to the experience of perfection, he writes that perfection is a "constant gradual"² growth and has its inception at the time of justification.³ Similarly, perfection is not a new kind of holiness, different from that progressively achieved in sanctification. "Love is the sum of Christian sanctification; it is the/^{one}

1. Wesley urges that one always use the adjectives "whole", "full" or "entire", in order to distinguish perfection from progressive sanctification. Works viii, 293-94 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
2. Letters iv, 225, Dec. 15, 1763.
3. Vide Works vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. viii, 285f. "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Letters viii, 190, Dec. 5, 1789. Once again Wesley must resist the Antinomian contention that man is wholly delivered from sin at the time he is justified. For this position obviously "strikes at the root" of perfection by doing away with the need for any further growth in grace, or for a "second" act by God. Vide Works v, 168-69 "The Repentance Of Believers", ibid. x, 276 "A Dialogue Between An Antinomian And His Friend", Letters v, 325, July 1, 1772.

kind of holiness, which is found, only in various degrees, in the believers who are distinguished by St. John into 'little children, young men, and fathers'. The difference between one and the other properly lies in the degree of love"¹. Therefore, "full sanctification" or "... perfection is only another term for holiness ..."² that derives from justification and is increasingly established in sanctification³.

III

Perfection as an Instantaneous Act

i

The Circumstances of the Act of Perfection

Considered in its second aspect, Christian perfection is an act in which God instantaneously cleanses the believer from all sin, and unites all his faculties in perfect obedience to indwelling love. This act is a "fresh manifestation" of grace, "a second change",⁴ (in addition to that at the time of justification and regeneration) when God "speaks" a "second time".⁵

When does this happen? Wesley replies that with God one day is as a thousand years, that quantity of time is nothing to Him; consequently He may fully sanctify a believer's soul at any time He chooses. Because "God is Sovereign in sanctifying as well as in justifying",⁶ His activity is beyond the anticipation or explanation of man. Always "there is a wonderful mystery in the manner and circumstances of that mighty working ..."⁷ Generally, however,

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1. Works vi, 488 "On Patience".
 2. Letters iii, 168, Mar. 26, 1756.
 3. In addition to the above references, Vide Works vi, 46 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. xi, 423, 429-30 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters iv, 187, Sept. 1762, ibid. iii, 213, Mar. 24, 1757.
 4. Letters v, 215, Dec. 28, 1770.
 5. Works v, 165 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 6. Letters iv, 97, June, 1, 1760.
 7. Ibid. iv, 55-6, Mar. 6, 1759. Vide also Works vi, 349 "The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge"

it happens that considerable time elapses between justification and perfection, and that usually at "the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body",¹ God grants the "second blessing". Yet this must not be fancied to be an invariable rule, for God frequently chooses to act "ten, twenty or forty years" before death. "I believe it is usually many years after justification, but that it may be within five years ~~or~~ five months after it".² "Accordingly we see, in fact, that some of the most unquestionable witnesses of sanctifying grace were sanctified within a few days after they were justified".³ Wesley writes, however, that he does not know of a single instance in which a person was justified, reborn, received the abiding witness of the Spirit and was wholly sanctified, all in one and at the same moment.⁴ He concludes that one is not to regard the blessing of perfection as necessarily reserved for the moment of death, as God may "cut short his work";⁵ rather, one is to hope for and expect it constantly after justification.⁶

We have said that the act of perfection is instantaneous. Wesley seems never to have varied his opinion on this point. In fact he goes so far as to say that one can hardly share even in a low degree of perfection unless an instantaneous change be wrought;⁷ if there be no such change the believer must be content to remain in sin until death, "continually deserving punishment".⁸

1. Letters v, 39, Jan. 27, 1767.

2. Ibid. v, 39, Jan. 27, 1767.

3. Ibid. iv, 268, Oct. 12, 1764.

4. Works xiv, 326 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems (1740)".

5. Ibid. xi, 423 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

6. Vide ibid. viii, 285f. "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. 329 "Minutes Of Several Conversations", ibid. xi, 393 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

7. Vide ibid. xiv, 262 "Preface To An Extract From The Journal Of Elizabeth Harper (1772)".

8. Ibid. v, 165 "The Repentance Of Believers".

For sin is only completely and finally destroyed the instant in which God acts a second time. A partially sanctified believer of himself is unable to uproot the vestiges of inbred sin: "... although we may weaken our enemies day by day; - yet we cannot drive them out. By all the grace which is given at justification we cannot extirpate them ... Most sure we cannot, till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again ..."¹ Accordingly, if sin be destroyed, continues Wesley, "... there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it".² Hence the act of perfection as extinction of sin must (logically) be instantaneous. Also, as we shall understand presently, since it is wrought by "a simple act of faith", it is consequently wrought "in an instant".³

Wesley rested his belief in the instantaneous nature of this act, however, mainly on the testimony of experience. Time after time we find him writing that he has always found the second blessing in his experience with believers to be instantaneous.⁴ As late as 1789 he writes that he has "never yet" known an exception.⁵ The most significant statement he makes on this point occurs in a sermon written very late in his life. After telling how he has questioned various people about the nature of their experience of perfection, he writes:

"Not trusting to the testimony of others, I carefully examined most of these myself; and in London alone I found six hundred and fifty-two members of our Society who were exceeding clear in their experience, and of

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1. Works v, 165 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 2. Ibid. xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Vide also ibid. viii, 329 "Minutes Of Several Conversations".
 3. Letters v, 39, Jan. 27, 1767.
 4. Vide Works vi, 53, "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vi, 509 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. xi, 393 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters iv, 225, Dec. 15, 1763, ibid. v, 39, Jan. 27, 1767, ibid. v, 215, Dec. 28, 1770, ibid. vii, 98, Jan. 7, 1782, ibid. vii, 267, Apr. 9, 1785, ibid. vii, 293, Sept. 24, 1785.
 5. Letters viii, 190, Dec. 5, 1789.

whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt ... every one of these (after the most careful inquiry, I have not found one exception either in Great Britain or Ireland) has declared that his deliverance from sin was instantaneous; that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one third, or one in twenty, declared it was gradually wrought in them, I should have believed this, with regard to them, and thought that some were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus; as all who believe they are sanctified, declare with one voice, that the change was wrought in a moment, I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, ²²instantaneous work".¹

ii

The Attitude of the Believer

We next inquire, what must be the attitude of the believer toward the act of full sanctification? What must be the condition of the soul to which God can speak, and which He can make perfect in love?

Since the growth in grace is a discipline and preparation for the further instantaneous change, we may reply, first, that those qualities that make for an increasingly sanctified soul also make for a perfected soul. These are, we recall, repentance and faith, and a disposition and practice of Christian love. The words "disposition and practice of Christian love", convey Wesley's positive conception of sanctification. As a description of the attitude of one who hopes for perfection, they denote Wesley's belief that only

"... in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous

1. Works vi, 490-91 "On Patience". It is to be observed that the act of full sanctification - Christian perfection - is what is here asserted to be instantaneous. It must not be confused with the initial experience of justification. It is true that Wesley conceives justification as almost (but not) always instantaneous. But these are two distinct experiences. As eminent a scholar as William James has confused them, mistaking "conversion" for the act of perfection. See the Varieties of Religious Experience p. 227.

keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God", can one expect the blessing of perfection. "And if any man dreams of attaining it in any other way, (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained ...) he deceiveth his own soul ... This consideration may satisfy those who inquire, why so few have received the blessing. Inquire, how many are seeking it in this way; and you have a sufficient answer". 1

Wesley elsewhere speaks of the disposition and practice of love as "the repentance" and "'the fruits meet for repentance', which are necessary to full sanctification".² By this he means that the love that finds favour in God's sight, in one sense springs from a realistic knowledge of the sin in oneself; that it is a sincere expression of a believer's effort to conquer and atone for his sin. A believer's love of God and his fellow men springs not only from the constraint of divine love, but also from the repugnance he feels toward his inbred sin. It is in this sense, therefore, that repentance is "indispensably necessary".

Yet, although the believer must always strive to love more perfectly, of himself he must always fail. The reality of sin is too vast and deep-rooted. Only God can deal with it. While in one sense repentance drives the believer to perform works of love, in another sense it causes him to despair of ever becoming holy. It becomes "... a conviction of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought, or to form one good desire; and much more to speak one word aright, or to perform one good action, but ³through his free almighty grace ...". Such grace is

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1. Works xi, 402-03 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Vide also ibid.v, 210f. "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. viii, 286 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Ibid.vi, 51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 3. Ibid.vi, 51 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

is apprehended by faith. Hence, faith is the final resting place of a soul seeking full sanctification.

Faith characterizes the believer's attitude, first, in that **through** its interaction with repentance (as we have observed in the preceding chapter) it inspires him to persevere in the conquest of sin. It may be said to be the "condition" of the act of perfection in this sense. In a more specific sense, faith is the "instrument" by which man lays hold on the sudden gift of perfecting¹ grace. It is the attitude of the believer at the instant that God extinguishes sin and sanctifies with love. This faith is an intensified form of that which more diffusely characterizes the convert from justification on through progressive sanctification. It consists of **three** elements which we now study at further length.

B

The Nature of the Faith Through Which Perfection is Wrought

"It is a divine evidence and conviction, First, that God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step further"². This statement implies that there must be established in the mind of the believer a knowledge of God's promises and a confidence in the integrity of God's word. It is something of the same confidence in God's promises that characterized Wesley himself, of which we have already written, that is urged upon one who seeks full sanctification; an attitude that finds expression in such sentences as the following: "I am convinced every believer may attain this ...";³

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1. Vide Works viii, 279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".
 2. Ibid. vi, 52 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation". Vide also ibid. vi, 492 "On Patience".
 3. Letters iv, 10, Apr. 5, 1758.

"It is described by the Holy Ghost as the common privilege of all
 ...";¹ Christian perfection " ... is the glorious privilege of
 every Christian ..."² To induce this faith Wesley constantly points
 to the promises of perfection recorded in the Bible.³ In light of
 these, one is urged to look upon perfection as "... the prize of
 thy high calling ... in its genuine native beauty; not as something
 that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be, to lead
 thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most desirable gift which is
 in all the stores of the rich mercies of God".⁴ To those who destroy
 or weaken a believer's confidence in the promise of grace by saying
 that perfection is impossible, Wesley flatly replies: "Who is able
 to make God a liar?"⁵

Hast thou not said, who cans't not lie,
 That I thy law shall keep and do?
 Lord, I believe, though men deny;
 They all are false, but thou art true.⁶

In short, to a sincere aspirant to perfection there stands the
 authority of the word and the spirit of the Christian revelation,
 that communion with God and the holiness necessary thereto are a
 promise that God will and can effect.

The faith that acts as an instrument in the act of Christian
 perfection "... is a divine evidence and conviction, Secondly, that
 what God hath promised he is able to perform".⁷ In its character
 as trust in the power of grace, faith is obviously a heightened
 form of that which sustains the believer throughout his course of
 progressive sanctification. It is especially necessary, however,

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1. Works xiv, 213 "Preface To An Extract From The Life And Death Of
Mr. Thomas Haliburton".
 2. Ibid. vi, 16 "Christian Perfection".
 3. Vide infra p. 280.
 4. Works vi, 41, "Satan's Devices".
 5. Ibid. viii, 21 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 6. Quoted by Wesley in an appendix to his sermon, "Christian Perfec-
 tion, from a poem by his brother entitled "The Promise Of Perfec-
 tion". Works vi, 21.
 7. Ibid. vi, 52 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

that this element of trust in the power of God's love be present at the moment of full sanctification. For it represents precisely the kind of despairing, yet joyous confidence in the ability of God to cleanse man from sin, with which God is well pleased. "Admitting, therefore, that 'with men it is impossible' to 'bring a clean thing out of an unclean', to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all righteousness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing 'with God all things are possible' ... if God speaks, it shall be done"¹. It is such a conviction as this that creates in the believer's soul the proper attitude toward perfection when he is made wretched by his recalcitrant sinful nature. Then he is to "come with boldness to the throne of grace; and be assured that what ..."² he asks God, God is able to do unto him. "Nothing can be wanting on God's part: As he has called us unto holiness, he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give"³.

The faith necessary to the act of Christian perfection "... is, Thirdly, a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now ... We may therefore boldly say, at any point of time, 'Now is the day of salvation!'"⁴ In this statement Wesley is encouraging an attitude of expectancy on the part of the believer. Such an attitude corresponds to the urgency of grace, of which we have previously written. This feeling for the imminence of the act of perfection is also intelligible in light of Wesley's belief that nothing is needed on the part of man but "naked faith"⁵. This

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1. Works vi, 52 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 2. Ibid. viii, 22 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 3. Ibid. vi, 416 "On Perfection".
 4. Ibid. vi, 52-3 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 5. Letters vi, 238. Oct. 25, 1776. Vide also ibid. v, 113, Nov. 18, 1768.

attitude of expectancy and hope characterizes the believer all through progressive sanctification. One finds it expressed in the following:

"We trust to love the Lord our God ... We expect to be 'made perfect in love' ... We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us always 'to walk in the light as he is in the light' ... we expect to be 'cleansed from all our idols' ... to be purified 'as He is pure'. We trust in his promise, who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when, in every word and work, we shall do his blessed will on earth, as it is done in heaven ...".¹

To intensify this feeling for the imminence, the "nowness" of the act of perfection, Wesley urges one to live "on the borders of perfect love",² to be "big with earnest expectation of receiving it every moment",³ to believe in "the nearness of the promise".⁴

B

The Relation of Faith and Works to Perfection

Because of his insistence that perfection is received only through "simple naked faith",⁵ Wesley is logically forced to rule out the efficacy of works. "As a poor sinner that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead ...",⁶ the believer trusts solely through faith in the grace of God. Both Wesley's doctrines of man and of grace force him to concede that man can bring nothing but faith to the experience of perfection. But the danger of Antinomianism this view affords, hardly needs to be pointed out. To avoid it, to

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1. Works vi, 33 "Satan's Devices"
 2. Letters v, 305, Feb. 8, 1772.
 3. Ibid. v, 83, Mar. 20, 1768.
 4. Ibid. v, 113, Nov. 18, 1768. Vide also ibid. v, 60, Aug. 8, 1767, ibid. v, 94, June 25, 1768, ibid. v, 290, Nov. 24, 1771.
 5. Ibid. iv, 269, Oct. 12, 1764.
 6. Works vi, 54, "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

assert the responsibility of man, Wesley does not hesitate to write, we recall, that the most strenuous moral striving and all manner of good works are "indispensably necessary".

It is obvious that he is here involved in the same difficulty as that discussed in the problem of pre-justification works. One sees it most clearly, perhaps, in the contrast of certain sections of the sermon on "The Scripture Way Of Salvation". On one page he writes that all "good works" "of piety and mercy" are "indispensably necessary"¹ to the blessing of full sanctification. On another page he vigorously rebukes those who feel they must first " ... be or do thus or thus" before they are sanctified. "Do you believe that we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle; and look for this blessing just as you are ..."²

Wesley himself perceived this difficulty. He sought to solve it in practically the same manner as he did the problem of the relation of repentance and faith to justification. He again distinguishes between the extent to which repentance and faith are necessary respectively to full salvation. The former is " ... not necessary either in the same sense with faith, or in the same degree"³. By the words "not in the same degree", Wesley means that repentance and its works are only necessary conditionally, if there be time and opportunity for them. A man may be sanctified by faith without good works, but he can never be sanctified by good works without faith. "Not in the same sense", means that faith is immediately and proximately necessary to sanctification, repentance and its fruits only remotely necessary.⁴

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1. Works vi, 49 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation.
 2. Ibid. vi, 53-4 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 3. Ibid. vi, 51-2 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation". Vide also Letters iv, 268-69, Oct. 12, 1764.
 4. Vide Works vi, 52 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

"All who expect to be sanctified at all expect to be sanctified by faith. But meantime they know that faith will not be given but to them that obey. Remotely, therefore, the blessing depends on our works, although immediately on simple faith".¹

One has difficulty in accepting the logic of this position. However, one must appreciate what Wesley is trying to do. He is striving to inculcate in the believer a proper realization of the great truth that perfection - as the whole course of salvation - is wrought alone by grace through faith. He is at the same time insisting that without inherent holiness no man can dwell in perfect communion with God. In the last analysis, however, it appears that if forced to emphasize one truth more than another, Wesley chooses the former. He explicitly writes that "faith is the condition, and the only condition, of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification".² This statement is typical of the general impression one receives from his writings on this point. Even at the danger of Antinomianism, which is really more theoretical than real in the present connection, Wesley must insist that always it is God alone Who works all good in man.

iii

The Nature of the Act of Perfection, or, the Act of Full Sanctification

The act of perfection bears three aspects, the first of which is "negative",³ - the destruction of the roots of inbred sin. God mysteriously delivers the believer from "... every evil desire,

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1. Letters iv, 71, Aug. 19, 1759. Vide also Works xi, 403 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Works vi, 49 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".
 3. Vide ibid. vi, 415 "On Perfection", ibid. vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

passion, temper; from all inbred corruption, from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin ..."¹ The extent of this deliverance may be understood by recalling how profoundly Wesley conceived even the partially sanctified to be infected with sin. For this deliverance is "infinitely greater" than any the believer has previously experienced; in fact, greater "... than any^{can} conceive till he experiences it".² It would appear that except for the "infirmities" that afflict man as long as he remains in the physical body, the blessing of perfection cleanses the believer from every vestige of the πρόνυμα σαρκός. The sinful nature is not only crowded out, it is extinguished.

In the instant the believer dies to sin, he "³ ... lives the full life of love". The love of God is shed abroad throughout his being and every holy disposition is implanted in his heart. This is the second, the "positive" aspect of perfection as an act, the loving God with all his heart, mind and soul.⁴ The believer's dispositions of love, until now imperfect and irresolute, become ὁλόκληρος,⁵ translated by Wesley as "entire". Such love is "... perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul".⁶ It is the fulfillment of the ancient promise: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul ..."⁷

The cleansing from sin and implanting of love issue in the

1. Works vi, 492 "On Patience"

2. Ibid. xi, 402 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection"

3. Ibid. xi, 402 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

4. Ibid. vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

5. Ibid. vi, 492 "On Patience".

6. Ibid. vi, 46 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation".

7. Deut. 30:6. Vide Letters v, 214-15, Dec. 28, 1770, Works vi, 489 "On Patience".

unification of the believer's soul, the third aspect of the act of perfection. All man's faculties are harmonized in accord with the purpose of their institution and sanctification, the love and service of God. Hitherto the unity of the soul was impaired by civil war, sundered by the struggle between the carnal mind and the new man initially put on in regeneration.¹ Man's will was not completely in accord with God's; his affections were sometimes centred on the world; his reason was devoted to something other than a knowledge of God. In a word, "till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was mixed"; but being perfected, "his whole soul is now consistent with itself..."² Because Christ has come to reign solely in the hearts of the perfected, he "... is our God and our All ...". The souls of the perfected are "ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι", made "complete in him", "filled with him".³ They yield themselves completely to the purpose for which they have been created and redeemed, to love God and enjoy Him forever.⁴

iv

The Witness of the Spirit

At the same instant the believer is cleansed from sin and filled with love, he generally experiences anew the witnessing presence of the Holy Spirit in a more intense degree than ever before. This particular type of assurance is the highest possible for the Christian to have. It is the "full assurance of hope";⁵

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1. Vide Works viii, 373-74 "The Principles Of A Methodist".
 2. Ibid. vi, 489 "On Patience".
 3. Ibid. vi, 430 "Spiritual Worship".
 4. Vide ibid. v, 207-08 "The Circumcision Of The Heart".
 5. Vide supra pp. 194-95, 196.

a "fresh manifestation" of God's love, separate from and in¹ addition to the witness first given in justification and adoption. When the full assurance of hope is simultaneous with the act of full sanctification, the believer is said to be "sealed by the Spirit".² Like the "clear assurance of faith" and the "full assurance of faith", the witness of perfection is twofold. It is first a direct testimony to the believer's inmost consciousness that the reality of sin is removed (analogous to the witness of the removal of sin's guilt in justification) and that he is loved by God. It is the voice of God sealing the believer's experience beyond the possibility of doubt or fear;³ that is, beyond doubt either of the genuineness⁴ of the work, or of the permanence of the work if he walk by the Spirit in love thenceforth. It is in the latter, the permanence of the work, that the distinctive character of this type of assurance is found. It is an assurance of hope in that it confirms the believer's confidence of receiving in the future "all the promises of God";⁵ "... that we shall endure to the end; or, more directly, that we shall enjoy God in glory".⁶ In view of this, Wesley is able to say that it is likely some believers may have a testimony that "... they shall not finally fall from God ... that neither life nor death shall separate them from Him ...".⁷

But this is not to say that they have an assurance that they cannot sin⁸ or that they cannot fall from grace.⁹ We shall understand

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1. Vide Works xi, 420-21 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide Letters v, 280, Oct. 4, 1771.
 3. Vide Works xi, 424 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", ibid. xiv, 323, "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems" (1740).
 4. Wesley's words are: "a direct, positive testimony of the Spirit that the work is done". Letters iii, 213, Mar. 24, 1757. Vide also ibid. vii, 57-8, Apr. 10, 1781.
 5. Works xi, 424 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 6. Letters vi, 323, Oct. 6, 1778. Vide also Works vii, 492 "On Grieving The Holy Spirit", ibid. xi, 380 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 7. Works xi, 421-22 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 8. Vide ibid. xi, 422 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 9. Vide ibid. x, 296 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The

presently that perfection is not unconditional. Even after being "sealed" by the Spirit, the promise of final salvation is dependent upon continual inherent holiness. Thus Wesley writes unequivocally that "... this confidence is totally different from an opinion that 'no saint shall fall from grace'. It has no relation to it. Bold, presumptuous men often substitute this base counter in the room of that precious confidence".¹

It is to be understood, however, that the full assurance of hope does not always accompany the act of full sanctification. It is indeed a privilege that all who are perfected may expect.² It is further true that there cannot be a lasting, uninterrupted enjoyment of pure love without some kind of a direct testimony of the Spirit, "without God's shining on His own work".³ Yet, the full assurance of hope is not essential to perfect love. Nor do all who are perfected enjoy it. As with other activities of the Spirit, there is a mysterious variability in this particular experience. Wesley acknowledges that it can variously happen that the full assurance of hope is given to those who are not perfected in love; that it is sometimes permanently - sometimes temporarily - denied to those who are; and that it can be interrupted or withdrawn after it has been initially experienced.⁴

Interruption or loss of the direct witness generally follows upon such "ill graces" as grieve the Spirit,⁵ a lessening of those

1. Letters vii, 58, Apr. 10, 1871.

2. Ibid. v, 50, June 18, 1767.

3. Ibid. vi, 88, June 3, 1774.

4. Ibid. vi, 323, Oct. 6, 1778, Works xi, 420, 424-25 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

5. Such are: unprofitable conversation, want of kindness, lasting displeasure, "anger, however soon it is over", "clamour or bawling", "tale-bearing". Works xi, 424 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

fruits of the Spirit whose possession constitutes the second part of the twofold experience of assurance, the indirect witness. We recall from chapter five that by this Wesley means that a believer infers from the existence of the fruits of the Spirit in his life, an assurance of acceptance with God. The holiness of his life demonstrates his sonship with God. This character Wesley also ascribes to the indirect witness of the Spirit in the full assurance of hope. Because Christian perfection is the highest stage of salvation, because the fruits of the Spirit are more completely existent in the believer than at any other time, his consciousness of them will give him a surer witness than he has ever known before. Wesley accordingly writes that the indirect witness is much stronger¹ in perfection than the similar witness in justification. On the other hand, "as a very little dust will disorder a clock, and the least sand obscure our sight ...",² so the least diminution of the fruits of the Spirit will disturb the state of grace in which the perfected live. Such disturbance, if not instantly checked, will inevitably weaken - if not expel - the witnessing presence of the Spirit. Hence, the weakening or loss of the indirect witness causes and precedes the loss of the direct witness.

IV

The State of Christian Perfection

We have already been carried into a consideration of the third main aspect of Christian perfection, i.e. a "state of soul"³ subsequent to the act of full sanctification and characterized by the

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1. Vide Works xi, 422-23 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Ibid. xi, 438 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 3. Ibid. viii, 22 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".

consequences of that act, salvation from sin and renewal in Christian love. In as much as this aspect is most important and bulks largest in Wesley's thought, it is here that we can best examine his use of the term "perfection".

i

Wesley's Use Of Terms, and His Definition of Perfection

Wesley is insistent that one understand what he means by "perfection". It too frequently happens that people apply their own idea of perfection to his doctrine and on this basis condemn it for one reason or another. Besides occasioning much confusion, this is patently unfair. "I fear many stumble on this stumbling block. They include as many ingredients as they please, not according to Scripture, but their own imagination, in their idea of one that is perfect; and then readily deny anyone to be such, who does not answer that imaginary idea".¹ The words, "according to Scripture", indicate the first of Wesley's affirmations about the term, "perfection". He seeks to be guided entirely by the Bible. "As to the word, it is scriptural; therefore neither you nor I can in conscience object against it, unless we would send the Holy Ghost to school and teach Him to speak who made the tongue".² "All the difficulty is, to fix the meaning of it according to the word of God".³ Secondly, perfection is not infallible nor absolute.⁴ "I never contended for it". "Absolute perfection

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1. Works xi, 401 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Italics mine. Vide also ibid. vi, 421 "On Perfection".
 2. Letters iv, 212, May, 12, 1763. Wesley refers to the following to support his use of the word, "perfect". Matt. 5:48; Luke 6:40; Col. 3:14; Phil. 3:12, 15; II Cor. 7:1; Heb. 6:1; 10:14; Jas. 1:4; John 17:23; I John 4:17-18. Vide also Letters iii, 157, Feb. 5, 1756.
 3. Works viii, 22 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 4. Letters iv, 213, May, 12, 1763.

belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone".¹ Also,
 "... no man, while in the body can possibly attain to angelic
 perfection. Neither can any man, while he is in a corruptible body,
 attain to Adamic perfection".² Thirdly, "I do not contend for the
 term 'sinless', though I do not object against it".³ "It is not
 worth disputing about".⁴ "... Sinless perfection is a phrase I
 never use ...".⁵ (We treat below in detail Wesley's view of per-
 fection as salvation from sin. We only report here the use of terms.)

Wesley's best description in scriptural language of one who is
 perfect, is probably the following, although numerous similar des-
 criptions are to be found throughout his writings.⁶

"But whom do you mean by one that is perfect?
 We mean one in whom 'is the mind which was in
 Christ', and who so 'walketh as Christ walked';
 a 'man that hath clean hands and a pure heart',
 or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of
 flesh and spirit'; ... who accordingly 'doth not
 commit sin' ... one in whom God hath fulfilled
 his faithful word, 'From all your filthiness and
 all your idols will I cleanse you: I will also
 save you from all your uncleannesses'. We under-
 stand hereby one whom God hath 'sanctified through-
 out, in body, soul and spirit'; one who 'walketh

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1. Works xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Ibid. vi, 412 "On Perfection".
 3. Letters iv, 187, Sept. 1762. Vide also Works x, 350 "Some Remarks
 On A Defence Of Aspasio Vindicated", ibid. xi, 446 "Brief Thoughts
 On Christian Perfection".
 4. Works xi, 418 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. Ibid. xi, 396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Vide also
ibid. x, 407 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 6. Vide Works vi, 33 "Satan's Devices", ibid. vi, 413 "On Perfection",
ibid. v, 268 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount -ii", ibid. v,
 203ff. "The Circumcision Of The Heart", ibid. vi, 6ff. "Christian
 Perfection", ibid. vii, 257 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid.
 vii, 432ff. "On The Death Of the Rev. Mr. John Fletcher", ibid.
 viii, 21-22 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion",
ibid. x, 407 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review", ibid. xi, 394ff.,
 442, 444 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", ibid. xiv, 323
 ff. "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems (1740)", Letters iii, 157
 Feb. 5, 1756, ibid. iv, 213, May 12, 1763, ibid. v, 223, Feb. 21, 1771,
Notes I Thess. 5:16; I Cor. 13:13.

in the light as he is in the light, in whom is no darkness at all; the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son having cleansed him from all sin'. This man can now testify to all mankind, 'I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. He is 'holy, as God who called him is holy' ... He 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart', and serveth him 'with all his strength'. He 'loveth his neighbour', every man, 'as himself'; yea, 'as Christ loved us' ... his soul is all love ... And his life agreeth thereto, full of 'the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love ...' In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven'. This is to be 'a perfect man', to be sanctified throughout ..."¹

One finds in this passage most of the texts Wesley uses to define the nature of perfection, although he does not limit himself to these alone. His favourite New Testament definitions are the following:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".²
 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".³ "Rejoice evermore: Pray without ceasing: In everything give thanks".⁴
 "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin because he is born of God".⁵

For Wesley, these texts best express the nature of the state of perfection. He readily admits, however, that there are different Biblical points of view from which one can define it. He enumerates,

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1. Works viii, 364-65, "The Principles Of A Methodist".
 2. Matt. 22:37-39. Vide Letters ii, 75, June 25, 1746.
 3. Gal. 2:20. Vide Works xiv, 272 "Preface To A Collection Of Forms Of Prayer" (1775).
 4. I Thess. 5:16-18. Vide Works xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. I John 3:8-9. Vide Works vi, 7ff. "Christian Perfection". In addition to the texts already cited, the following are used by Wesley to support and explain the doctrine of perfection. Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25-27; Ps. 130:8; Zech. 12:8; Matt. 7:17; Luke 1:73-75; John 17:20-23; Acts 15:9; Rom. 6:1-2, 5-7, 11, 14; 8:3-4, 16; 13:10; I Cor. 13:1ff; II Cor. 10:5; Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:13; 3:14, 16-19; 4:24; 5:25-27; Col. 10:4f; I Thess. 5:23; Tit. 2:11-14; I Pet. 1:15; 2:5; 4:1-2; I John 1:5, 7, 9; 2:1, 19; 3:3; 5:18-19.

for example, fourteen different aspects of the state of perfection suggested by various applications of scripture; but he makes clear these are not "gifts of a new kind".¹

Three main elements emerge in Wesley's comprehensive conception of the state of Christian perfection. It is first salvation from all sin; secondly, perfect love of God and man. The third element, though intimately connected with the other two, yet bears a certain individuality, and we choose to treat it separately as communion with God. We study perfection first as salvation from all sin.

ii

Perfection as Salvation From all Sin

The very first difficulty that confronts us is the use of terms. Wesley himself appears never to use the phrase "sinless perfection", though he writes, we recall, that he does not object to it and that he believes in it.² He also writes that "sinful perfection" is "... just as different from what I contend for as heaven is from hell".³ On the other hand, he states that if perfection be defined solely as "perfect love", he does not object to the term "sinful perfection".⁴ The weightiest consideration,⁵ however, lies in the evidence his writings afford both implicitly and explicitly that perfection is salvation from all sin. In fact, Wesley really has no logical reason for not using the term

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1. Works xi, 429-30 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Vide also ibid. vi, 413f. "On Perfection", ibid. xi, 444 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters v, 141, June 27, 1769.
 2. Vide Letters iv, 187, Sept. 1762.
 3. Vide ibid. ii, 63, Dec. 30, 1745.
 4. Ibid. iii, 170, Mar. 12, 1756.
 5. Works x, 407 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".

"sinless perfection". It is unreasonable to write as vigorously as he that perfection is salvation from all sin - always remembering his definition of sin -, and yet to refuse to use the phrase in question.¹ For in terms of his definition of sin, Wesley's doctrine is a doctrine of sinless perfection. It is likely that his sensitiveness on this point was mainly due to a desire to avoid anything that encouraged Antinomianism. This is illustrated for example in his preference for defining perfection as perfect love of God and man, rather than as sinlessness. It is also likely that he refused to use the phrase because it was not Biblical.

He admits that sinlessness is a difficult point, in fact, the "great point in question".² "I have frequently observed, and not without surprise, that the opposers of perfection are more vehement against it when it is placed in this view, than in any other whatsoever. They will allow all you say of the love of God and man ... so we will allow sin, a little sin, to remain in us till death".³ Against this view he builds his doctrine, first, on the proposition that both in letter and spirit Christianity addresses itself to even the most depraved sinner with the promise that he shall be entirely cleansed from the guilt, the power and the reality of sin. To deny this, Wesley would say, does ill to a gospel promulgated by God with the specific purpose of making the redeemed fit to share in fellowship with Him, to which salvation

1. For example, vide Works xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

2. Letters iv, 167, Dec. 26, 1761.

3. Works vi, 423 "On Perfection".

from sin is indispensable. To doubt that God delivers man from sin is to suspect His integrity. God does not repent of any of the promises He has made to the children of men. If we believe in His faithfulness, that He is willing and able to effect what He has promised, "Why should we imagine, that he will make an exception to the most precious of all his gifts on this side heaven?"¹ Would it not be "mere mockery of God" to enjoin men to pray for perfection,² "were there no such thing?" Hence we find Wesley going to great pains to consider the scriptural promises of sinlessness.³ He concludes: "A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin ... to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers, ... a deliverance from inward as well as outward sin ... in this world".⁴

We have written that both in letter and in spirit Christianity addresses itself to men with the promise of salvation from all sin. The latter is most clearly seen in the incarnation and atonement of our Lord. Wesley asks: Is it not a dishonour to the purpose of Christ's descent to the world of men, and to his sacrifice for their sins, to suppose that he does not cleanse from all sin? Was he not made manifest to destroy all the works of the devil? To deny that

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1. Works vi, 420 "On Perfection".
 2. Ibid. viii, 295 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations". Vide also Ibid. xi, 409 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Such prayers are those found in John 17:20-21, 23; Eph. 3:14, 16-19; I Thess. 5:23.
 3. Wesley consults the following scriptures to establish his doctrine of perfection as salvation from all sin. Ps. 130:8; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25, 29; Matt. 5:48; 22:37; Luke 1:69-75; 6:40; Rom. 6:1, 2, 5-7, 14, 18; 8:3-4; II Cor. 10:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16-19; 5:26-27; I Thess. 5:23; Tit. 2:11-14; I Pet. 4:1-2; I John 1:6-7; 3:7-10; 4:17; 5:18.
 4. Works vi, 15-18 "Christian Perfection". Vide also Ibid. vi, 416-21, 423-24 "On Perfection", Ibid. viii, 294 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", Ibid. viii, 20-1 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", Ibid. xiv, 212 - 13 "Preface To An Extract Of The Life And Death Of Mr. Thomas Haliburton".

sinlessness is possible,

"to say Christ will not reign alone in our hearts in this life, will not enable us to give Him all our hearts - this in my judgment is making Him an Half-Saviour",¹ to have "come in vain".² "I pray, then, ...Who exalts Christ most? those who call on Him to be the sole monarch of the heart, or those who allow Him only to share the power and to govern most of the thoughts and tempers? Who honour Him most? those who believe that He heals all our sickness, takes away all our ungodliness, or those who say, He heals only the greater part of it ...? is it all³ salvation or only half salvation He will give"?

Those who do not offend but welcome the purpose of our Lord's incarnation and atonement, join in praying:

Answer that gracious end in me
For which thy precious life was given;
Redeem from all iniquity,
Restore, and make me meet for heaven.
Unless thou purge my every stain,
Thy suffering and my faith are vain.

Didst thou not die, that I might live,
No longer to myself but thee?
Might body, soul, and spirit give
To Him who gave Himself for me?
Come then, my Master and my God,
Take the dear purchase of thy blood.⁴

The view that denies sinlessness is possible also assumes in Wesley's mind the form of a doctrine of "the necessity of sinning". He attacks this view not only in order to expose its falsity, but also to make clear by contrast the nature of his own doctrine. He rejects it as false, first, on the basis of scripture; secondly, because it is subversive of ethical holiness. This doctrine he conceives to be substantially that of the Gnostic doctrine of "sinful perfection", which (Wesley holds) asserts that although the perfected actually do commit sin, such commissions are not sinful because the perfected are children of God. "The doctrine of the Gnostics was not that a child of God does not

1. Letters iv, 158, July 7, 1761.

2. Ibid. iv, 12, Apr. 5, 1758.

3. Ibid. iv, 158, July 7, 1761.

4. Quoted by Wesley from a volume of hymns published by himself and his brother in 1742, in Works xi, 385 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

commit sin, i.e. act the things that are forbidden in Scripture, but that they are not sin in him ..."¹ This is a crucial point for Wesley. He takes pains to make clear that according to his own doctrine, the perfected are sinless not only because they do not commit sin, but because they are delivered from sin's reality . One will note how violently he rejects even the suggestion of Antinomianism,² "... sinful perfection: just as different from what I contend for as heaven is from hell"³.

This brings us to the point where we must define more precisely what Wesley means by sinlessness. As we have suggested, it is first a deliverance from all outward acts of sin; secondly, an entire deliverance from the inward reality of sin. He uses such expressions as the following: "all inward sin taken away";⁴ "saved from all sin";⁵ "sin rooted out both of your life and heart";⁶ deliverance "from all inbred corruption, from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin";⁷ "from all inward as well as outward sin".⁸ We might multiply our references almost

1. Letters iii, 170, Mar.12,1756.

2. To those who contend that perfection is the absence of habitual, continual sin, Wesley replies with the following. "I tell my neighbour here, 'William, you are a child of the devil; for you commit sin; you was drunk yesterday'. 'No sir', says the man, 'I do not live or continue in sin ... I am not drunk continually, but only now and then, once in a fortnight or a month'. Now, sir, how shall I deal with this man? ... all that you say of living,ⁱⁿ continuing in, serving sin, as different from committing it, and of its not reigning, ... is making so many loop-holes whereby any impenitent sinner may escape from all the terrors of the Lord". Letters iii,169, Mar.12,1756.

3. Ibid.iii,170,Mar.12,1756.

4. Works viii,279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

5. Ibid.viii,295 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations".

6. Ibid.vi,423 "On Perfection".

7. Ibid.vi,492 "On Patience".

8. Ibid.vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith".

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indefinitely. The evidence is clear and abundant. A perfected man is sinless in that not only does he not commit sin; he is also totally delivered from the inward reality of sin.

We must immediately qualify this position, however, in accord with Wesley's explicit terms. It must first be understood that a believer does not commit sin in the sense that Wesley defines the meaning of the word "sin".

"By sin, I here understand ... an actual, voluntary transgression of the law; of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such at the time it is transgressed".²

Whenever man concurs in a transgression of the moral law, he sins. In so far " ... as there is more or less concurrence of his will",³ there is more or less condemnation. An "involuntary transgression"⁴ is not sin.

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Infirmities, and Defects of Conduct

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It is in terms of this definition that Wesley allows certain defects of conduct to be consistent with sinless perfection. He speaks of these defects as "infirmities", "mistakes", as ἀνὸμια.⁶ They pertain to "things not essential to

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1. Vide Works vi, 6ff. "Christian Perfection", ibid. vi, 53 "The Scripture Way Of Salvation", ibid. vi, 416ff. "On Perfection", ibid. viii, 20-1 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. viii, 294ff. "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. x, 395 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review", ibid. xi, 375ff. 387ff., 409, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters ii, 63, Dec. 20, 1745, ibid. iii, 170, Mar. 12, 1756, ibid. iii, 213, Mar. 24, 1757, ibid. iv, 11, Apr. 5, 1758, ibid. iv, 158, July, 7, 1761, ibid. iv, 188, Sept. 15, 1762, ibid. iv, 213, May, 12, 1763, ibid. vi, 217, May, 3, 1776, Notes I Cor. 1:30.
 2. Works v, 227 "The Great Privilege Of Those That Are Born Of God". Vide also ibid. vi, 417 "On Perfection", ibid. xi, 396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters v, 322, June 16, 1772.
 3. Works v, 93 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit". Vide also ibid. v, 11 "Salvation By Faith".
 4. Vide ibid. xi, 396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. See also the discussion of the nature of sin in chapter one, supra pp. 28-29.
 6. Letters iv, 216, June 22, 1763.

salvation",¹ "not of a moral nature".² Indeed, Wesley does not hesitate to write that "a thousand infirmities are consistent even with the highest degree of holiness ..."³

This category of non-moral defects first includes those that arise from human ignorance. Perfection " ... does not make a man infallible ..."⁴ in either secular or religious knowledge. There are innumerable things of both the invisible and visible worlds that he knows not. "So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge, of even the best of men".⁵ From ignorance, arise mistakes in "things unessential to salvation".⁶ He errs in judgment because his knowledge of facts is insufficient. He frequently supposes things to be what they are not, and vice versa. He may, for example, be mistaken in his judgment of " ... another person and think him to be more or less faulty than he really is. Hence he may speak to him with more or less severity than the truth requires". But this "... is no proof at all, that the person so speaking is not perfect".⁷

Non-moral defects also arise from infirmities of mind and body.⁸ As long as man lives he is encompassed with innumerable weaknesses which cause such defects as heaviness of imagination,

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1. Works xi,383 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Vide also ibid.xiv,328 "Preface To Hymns and Sacred Poems" (1745).
 2. Ibid.vi,4-5 "Christian Perfection".
 3. Letters v,6, Mar. 29, 1766.
 4. Works xi,442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. Ibid. vi,3 "Christian Perfection ". Vide also ibid.vi,412-13 "On Perfection", ibid.viii,364 "The Principles Of A Methodist", ibid.xi,394 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", ibid.xiv,328-29 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems" (1745).
 6. Ibid. vi,3 "Christian Perfection".
 7. Ibid.xi,399 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 8. Vide ibid. vi,4-5 "Christian Perfection",ibid.vi,219f. "On The Fall Of Man", ibid.vi,275-76 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid.vi,412-13 "On Perfection", ibid.vi,477-78 "On Temptation", ibid.x,399-401 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review",ibid.xi,383 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters v,284f.,Oct. 28, 1771.

unretentive memory, ungracefulness of pronounciation, etc.¹ These may be due either to infirmities of mind or body, for each intimately affects the other,² we recall. Such infirmities are the heritage of man's membership in Adam, imperfections from which even the perfected can never be free. Because the "angelic" or the "perfect" law originally addressed to Adam held no place for defects of this kind, man must ever transgress the Adamic law because he ever bears certain vestiges of Adam's nature. Yet, as we shall understand presently, Christ has established another law, "the law of love", only to which the Christian owes obedience. While infirmities of mind and body cause him to fall short of the former,³ they do not prevent him from perfectly obeying the latter.³

A very characteristic defect of this kind is what Wesley speaks of as "wandering thoughts",⁴ distractions of the soul from God perhaps occasioned by a disordered mind or by physical pain. Infirmities also give rise to "sins of surprise". Such so-called sins are involuntary transgressions, illustrated (by Wesley) in the momentary anger of a gentleman whose goutish toe has been carelessly stepped on!⁵ It is difficult to formulate a rule by which the sinfulness of such transgressions can be measured. In general they incur guilt

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1. Vide Works vi, 5 "Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide supra pp. 4-5.
 3. Vide Works vi, 275-76 "The End Of Christ's Coming", ibid. xi, 414ff. "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters iv, 155, June 7, 1761, ibid. v, 322, June 16, 1772.
 4. Vide Works vi, 25-7, 29-31, Letters iv, 188, Sept. 15, 1762. As late as 1741 Wesley apparently did not believe that even such distractions as wandering thoughts troubled the perfected. Experience, however, came to teach him otherwise. Vide Works xi, 379 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. Vide Works x, 400 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".

and displeasure in the sight of God in so far as they are voluntary.¹
From all such infirmities and consequent defects of conduct, " ...
none can hope to be perfectly freed, till the spirit returns to
God that gave it".²

It is further true that temptation is consistent with per-
fection,³ both in the sense that the perfected believer can be a
source of temptation to other people because of the infirmities
that trouble him,⁴ and in the sense that he personally knows
what it is to be tempted. Even our Lord was tempted, writes Wesley,
and the servant is as his master.⁵ Temptation assails every man
as long as he lives in the world of men, and as long as Satan and
his spirits carry on their evil machinations.

"A man strikes me. Here is a temptation to anger.
But my heart overflows with love. And I feel no
anger at all; of which I can be as sure, as that love
and anger are not the same ... Thus it is, if I am
tempted by a present object; and it is just the same,
if, when it is absent, the devil recalls ... an injury
... to my mind. In the instant the soul repels the
temptation, and remains filled with pure love".⁶

Temptation only occasions actual sin when it is entertained, and
through grace the perfected believer can always instantly repel
it. God suffers no trials to befall man except those proportioned
to his strength. For the justice, the mercy and the faithfulness
of God requires it to be so.⁷ Hence, temptations are consistent with
salvation from sin, both because grace enables man to repel them
before their lingering presence occasions sin; and because they

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1. Vide Works v, 93, 97 "The First Fruits Of The Spirit".
 2. Ibid. vi, 5 "Christian Perfection".
 3. It appears that this opinion also was not formed until after 1741. For in this year Wesley wrote that "temptations" do not trouble the perfected. This was subsequently qualified by an appended note: "Sometimes they do not; at other times they do, and that grievously". Works xi, 380 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 4. Vide ibid. vi, 479 "On Temptation".
 5. Vide ibid. vi, 5 "Christian Perfection", ibid. vi, 479 "On Temptation".
 6. Ibid. xi, 419 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 7. Vide ibid. vi, 480f. "On Temptation".

arise from a source beyond man's control, involving no concurrence of the will.

In view of the defects that Wesley allows to consist with perfection, one may quite reasonably suppose that sinless perfection is impossible as long as man remains in a mortal body. This position was quite familiar to Wesley. He refutes this "grand argument"¹ first, of course, by replying that defects due to the body (if they are not voluntary) are not properly sins. Moreover, to believe that man shall not be made sinless until his soul be released from the body, is contrary to scripture, illogical, and faithless to the promises made by Christianity both in letter and in spirit.² For the Bible nowhere asserts that there is such a thing as a sinful body, though St. Paul does of course employ the word "flesh". But this "... no more means the body than it does the soul".³ It is also absurd to say that the body is sinful, for, "Pray in what part of the body should sin lodge? It cannot lodge in the skin, nor in the muscles, or nerves, or veins, or arteries ... Only the soul can be the seat of sin".⁴ If God can sanctify man while he inhabits a house of brick and stone, He can also sanctify him while he inhabits walls of flesh and blood. Lastly, the gospel promises that the blood of Christ redeems from all sin. If full sanctification is deferred until the soul leaves the body, "... is it not something else, 'not the blood of Christ which cleanseth'

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1. Works vi, 418-19 "On Perfection".
 2. Wesley did not always hold this opinion. In a letter written in 1758, he admits that "twenty years ago" he believed "... that we should not put off the infection of nature but with our bodies ... But I believe otherwise now ..." Letters iv, 11, Apr. 5, 1758. Vide also Works vii, 370-71 "The Trouble And Rest Of Good Men (ca. 1735)".
 3. Works vi, 418 "On Perfection".
 4. Ibid. vi, 418 "On Perfection".

it 'from all sin'? If his blood cleanseth us from all sin, while the soul and body are united, is it not in this life?" And if in the next, "... is not this too late?"¹ Similarly, the gospel promises man that as Christ is, "... so are we in this world",² that "perfected" Christians are "as their Master"³ while they are his disciples. It is true that no human can ever be as righteous as Christ was.⁴ Yet, one does violence to the promises of Christianity to suppose that man cannot be freed from all sin in this world.⁵

It becomes clear, therefore, that the perfected man is completely delivered from sin in that he willingly transgresses no known law of God. Defects of conduct incident to the union of flesh and spirit, to infirmities of mind and body, are not sinful. In accord with Wesley's definition of sin, perfection is sinless. The problem this position involves will be treated presently.

iii

Perfection as Love of God and Man

To be fair to Wesley's mind, we must make clear that perfection is essentially "perfect love".⁶ It is not to be assumed from the space we have proportioned to the treatment of perfection as sinlessness, and as love, that the former stands as most important in Wesley's doctrine. Quite the contrary. When pressed to define perfection, he almost invariably chooses to write that it is the perfect

1. Works xi, 409 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
2. I John 4:17. Quoted in this connection by Wesley in Works vi, 18 "Christian Perfection".
3. Luke 6:40.
4. Vide Letters v, 248, May 18, 1771.
5. Vide Works viii, 328 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", *ibid.* x, 327 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification", *ibid.* xi, 408-09 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", *ibid.* vi, 415f. "On Perfection".
6. I John 4:18. Vide Works xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

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love of God and man.

"This is the sum of Christian perfection: It is all comprised in that one word, Love. The first branch of it is the love of God: And as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself': Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us ... These contain the whole of Christian perfection".² "I pin down all its opposers to this definition of it. No evasion! No shifting of the question!"³

He also writes that "'faith working by love' is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection".⁴

The character of this love has been described in the preceding chapter on sanctification⁵ and it is not necessary to write of it again. For perfection implies no new kind of holiness, we recall, only a greatly increased degree. There is no quality of love in perfection that is not found in progressive sanctification. All that we have previously written of the disposition and practice of Christian love likewise applies to perfection. It is enough to say that perfect love bears the character described by St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians. This is "the height and depth of genuine perfection".⁶ Such love is not only manifest in a believer's actions; it profoundly constitutes his inmost nature. In fact, love is as deeply resident in him as the roots of inbred sin previously were. Sin is spoken of as not only destroyed, but crowded out by love. One may judge from this the extent to which love has become the dominant, unifying disposition

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1. Vide Works viii, 279 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. viii, 365 "The Principles Of A Methodist", ibid. x, 407 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review", ibid. xi, 368, 393-94, 401, 418 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Letters iii, 157, Feb. 5, 1756, ibid. iv, 188, Sept. 15, 1762, ibid. ii, 49, Sept. 28, 1745, ibid. v, 223, Feb. 21, 1771, Notes Col. 3:14.
 2. Works vi, 413 "On Perfection".
 3. Journal v, 284, Aug. 27, 1768.
 4. Works xiv, 321 "Preface To Hymns And Sacred Poems (1739)".
 5. Vide supra pp. 242 ff.
 6. Letters v, 268, July 13, 1771. Vide also Notes I Cor. 13:13.

of man's being.

Such love fulfills the "law of love" (or the "law of faith", Wesley uses both terms,¹) under which all men have been placed by Christ. "Faith working or animated by love is all that God now requires of man".² From Adam God required perfect obedience to the "angelic law", "the Adamic law", which, addressed to a perfect creature, allowed no defects of conduct for infirmities, but " ... required that he should always think, always speak,³ and always act precisely right, in every point whatever". Hence Wesley speaks of the Adamic law as the "perfect law" in the fullest sense, of which even the law of love is only a branch.⁴ But Christ has put an end to the Adamic law and no condemnation is attached to its transgressions. It is the law of perfect love that man is under.

Wesley writes that "in one sense"⁵ this law is perfectly fulfilled by the love we have described. Yet he is reluctant to say that a believer never "offends" his brother, and at the expense of contradiction writes that the perfect continually fall short of even the law of love.⁶ As we shall understand presently, it is for this reason - among others - that even in a state of perfection man needs the atonement of Christ. Such failures of obedience to the law of love, however, are not occasioned by the will of man; but are due to the (infirmities and) defects of conduct we have previously described. In this sense, therefore, Wesley would not say that they were sins.

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1. Vide Works xi, 415, 416 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Ibid. xi, 416 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 3. Ibid. xi, 415 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 4. Vide Letters iv, 155, June 7, 1761.
 5. Works xi, 417 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". Italics mine. Vide also Letters iv, 167, Dec. 26, 1761.
 6. Vide ibid. xi, 417 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

Despite these difficulties, (which we shall presently discuss at length), the significance of Wesley's definition of perfection as essentially "perfect love" must not be lost upon us. It represents his belief that there is nothing more final for the Christian life than love. He chooses to describe the height of salvation in terms of the cardinal injunction of Christianity, that command upon which hang all the Law and the Prophets. That he prefers to conceive perfection as love rather than as sinlessness, and that he insists it be ethical, reflects his fundamental concern for holiness at the same time that it honours the promise and power of God's love as Christ^{has} revealed it to men.

iv

Perfection as Communion With God

When considered as a state of soul subsequent to the act of full sanctification, perfection is the communion of the Christian soul with God. The nature of this doctrine will be recalled from our treatment in the chapter on sanctification,¹ in which it was made clear that all God's dispensations pronounce the claim of divine love on every soul. Fellowship with God, however, was found to be not only a claim, but also a promise warranted by both the letter and spirit of the New Testament. When man has become so holy as to make it possible for God to destroy the last roots of sin and fill him with love, he enters into the fulness of the promise.

Accordingly, Wesley writes that "true perfection" is "to be one spirit with" God;² that it is "the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man".³ This aspect of perfection

1. Vide supra pp. 216-222.

2. Notes Heb. 7:19.

3. Works v, 303-04 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv".

bears a definitely mystical character, which is, however, quite in accord with the experiential nature of salvation as conceived in Wesley's theology. The doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, we recall, signified his conviction that the Christian finds his surest knowledge of God through an experience of His immanent nature. Because alienating sin has been destroyed and man dwells in perfect love, the experience of communion with God in perfection is singularly profound and intense. Wesley acknowledges the mystery of this experience: "Human words cannot fully describe the emotions of souls that are full of God".¹ Such phrases as the following portray its mystical nature: "clothed with God";² "being filled with the fulness of God";³ "a feeling possession of God in your heart";⁴ "constant communion with God" "in the most experimental manner";⁵ made "a partaker of the divine nature";⁶ "intercourse between your soul and God";⁷ "plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea".⁸ These describe how man is possessed by God, how he has responded utterly to the claim of divine love upon him:⁹ "... he is God's, and God is his".¹⁰ Except for the distractions inevitable for one dwelling in a physical body, the believer is completely a spiritual being. His soul has entered into a union with the divine Over-Soul. God has completely recovered the human spirit for Himself.

The essence of this fellowship is love. The believer has a

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1. Notes Rom. 9:3.
 2. Works xi, 386 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". This phrase is from a hymn quoted by Wesley.
 3. Ibid. vi, 276 "The End Of Christ's Coming".
 4. Ibid. vii, 377 "Free Grace"
 5. Letters vi, 45, Sept. 29, 1773.
 6. Works xiv, 204 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern".
 7. Letters v, 248, May, 18, 1771. Vide also Notes II Pet. 1:4.
 8. Works viii, 19 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion".
 9. Ibid. xi, 370 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection". This phrase is from a hymn quoted by Wesley.
 10. Notes Heb. 8:12.

constant sense of God's love for him at the same time that he perfectly loves God. Because all his conduct is governed by a desire to love and enjoy God, Wesley writes that his life is one constant¹ prayer. This conception explains Wesley's fondness for defining perfection in terms of I Thess. 5:17-18: "Pray without ceasing: In everything give thanks".²

Some believers experience God in His Trinitarian nature. Those who are "fathers in Christ", "... 'have known him that is from the beginning'; the eternal Three-One God". To illustrate the character of this experience Wesley frequently quotes the expression of a certain Marquis de Renty: "'I bear about with me an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity'".³ Wesley does not rule out, in fact, the possibility of a perfected believer penetrating the mystery of the Trinity and comprehending⁴ "how" three bear record in heaven. It is to be understood, however,⁵ that an experience of God as three Persons is extremely rare, though Wesley at one time thought it to be common to all.⁶ He indeed mentions several examples.⁷ But it is very rare and is not necessary to⁸ Christian perfection.

It happens more often that the perfected enjoy an intense experience of the person of Christ. Wesley writes that they "... are as

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1. Vide Works xi, 437-38 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters v, 337, Aug. 31, 1772, Notes Matt. 6:7-9, I Thess. 5:16; Eph. 6:18.
 2. Vide Works vii, 237-38 "On The Discoveries Of Faith", ibid. xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Notes I Thess. 5:16.
 3. Works vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of Faith". Vide also ibid. vi, 205 "On The Trinity", Letters i, 112, Oct. 3, 1731, ibid. viii, 83, Aug. 8, 1788.
 4. Vide Works vi, 2 "Christian Perfection".
 5. Vide Letters vi, 266, June 11, 1777, ibid. vii, 392, July 4, 1787.
 6. Vide ibid. vii, 392, July 4, 1787, ibid. viii, 83, Aug. 8, 1788.
 7. Vide ibid. vi, 263, Apr. 26, 1777, ibid. viii, 15, Oct. 6, 1787, ibid. viii, 83, Aug. 8, 1788.
 8. Vide ibid. vi, 266, June 11, 1777.

intimately united to Christ, in a spiritual sense, as if" they¹
"were literally 'flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone'". One
whose communion with God has come to take the form of Christ-
mysticism, is able to say: Christ " ... is a fountain of life in
my inmost soul, from which all my tempers, words, and actions flow²
... I derive every moment from that supernatural principle".
Of one whose experience is epitomized in St. Paul's words, "Christ
liveth in me", Wesley writes:

"This is ... the last stage of Christian holiness:
This maketh the man of God perfect. He ... is on
the last round of the ladder to heaven: Grace hath
had its full work upon his soul: The next step he
takes is into glory".³

In fact, because man's communion with God is one of love, he
has already come to share in eternal life. "For love is the begin-⁴
ning of eternal life. It is the same, in substance, with glory".
It is the "essence of heaven"⁵ One finds this note frequently
struck in Wesley's writings on perfection. The fully sanctified
soul has a consciousness of living a life supra time. An extra
dimension seems to be lent to it. A feeling of supernaturalness,
of miraculousness attends it. Wesley speaks of communion with God
as one "continued miracle", as no less a miracle than God's⁶
"continually sustaining a stone in air". To portray this quality
Wesley uses the figure of the kingdom of God, and speaks of it as⁷
" ... a spiritual kingdom, an internal principle ... in the heart",
as "already opened in the soul".⁸ The religion of the perfected is

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1. Notes Eph. 5:30.
 2. Ibid. Gal. 2:20. Vide also Works vi, 413 "On Perfection", ibid. vi, 430 "Spiritual Worship".
 3. Works xiv, 272 "Preface To A Collection Of Forms Of Prayer (1775)".
 4. Notes I John 3:15.
 5. Ibid. John 3:36.
 6. Letters v, 4, Feb. 28, 1766.
 7. Notes Luke 17:21. Vide also ibid. Matt 3:2.
 8. Works v, 257 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount -i". Vide also ibid. vi, 430 "Spiritual Worship", ibid. vii, 215 "On Riches", Letters v, 122. 1768.

defined as "... no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity; and hereby walking in the love of God and man ... This, and this alone, is that 'life which is hid with Christ in God'.¹ He alone who experiences this 'dwells in God, and God in him'".

Lastly, the perfected man is utterly happy. He experiences the blessedness of the redeemed. He has achieved the true purpose of his creation and salvation, to love God and enjoy Him forever. This deep note of joy runs through all Wesley's writings on perfection. It is most clearly seen in that part of his definition of perfection taken from I Thess. 5:16: "' Rejoice evermore' - in uninterrupted happiness in God ... This is Christian perfection ... It is the very design of the gospel that, being saved ... we should be happy in the love of Christ".²

Joy is accompanied by peace, " ... an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, a tranquillity ... which keeps the souls of believers ...", which " ...flows as a river, even in such a degree³ as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive".

V

Three Ways in Which the Doctrine of Perfection is Formulated in Order to Provide for Continual Holiness

It will be recalled from the discussion of the state of perfec-

1. Works vii, 263 "The Difference Between Walking By Sight, And Walking By Faith".
2. Notes I Thess. 5:16. Vide also Works v, 256-57 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-i", ibid.v, 373 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-viii", ibid.vi, 498ff. "The Important Question", ibid.vi, 489f. "On Patience". The element of joy in salvation finds its most distinctive expression in the hymns written by John and Charles Wesley. L. Tyerman observes that a competent authority has estimated, that during the Wesley's' lifetime, no fewer than six thousand, six hundred hymns were written by Charles Wesley alone. See The Life and Times of John Wesley i, 397. The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley are published in 13 volumes.
3. Works vii, 433 "On The Death Of Mr. Fletcher".

tion as salvation from all sin, that Wesley is unwilling to affirm that a believer never transgresses the law of love. His definition of sin as a "voluntary transgression" of course allows him to maintain that technically such transgressions are not sinful. Yet, they prevent the believer from performing perfect obedience to the law of love. Wesley insists on this point in order to dispel any moral complacency or spiritual pride. He realized that there must always be preserved a tension between what the believer is, and what he may yet become; it is this tension that produces and sustains holiness. (As similar expressions of the desire to insist on continual holiness and to avoid anything remotely approaching Antinomianism, we also note Wesley's sensitiveness with regard to the use of the phrase, "sinless perfection"; and pre-eminently, his definition of perfection as love of God and man). Positively, there are three ways in which Wesley seeks to preserve a tension in the believer's soul that makes for continual holiness. All three, though different, have this fundamental affinity. They are united in Wesley's mind in order to enforce the truth that even the enjoyment of perfect salvation^{is}/conditional upon an unremitting effort to be holy.

i

Perfection Necessitates Growth in Grace

Wesley first insists that full sanctification does not exclude growth. Because it is not "absolute", not an "indivisible point", it admits of a continual increase.¹ It is relative, a perfection of degrees.² The believer cannot stand still. He must either go

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1. Works xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide Letters iii, 168, Mar. 12, 1756.

forward or slip backward. "Therefore the voice of God ... is,
¹
 'Go forward!'" This growth corresponds in nature to that of
 progressive sanctification. It is a **constant** effort to live a life
 of sinlessness, and a constant disposition and practice of Christian
 love. It appears to be especially a growth in the knowledge and love
² of God as Saviour that continues "to all eternity".³ It necessi-
 tates the believer's activity though it is carried on entirely by
 grace. Thus Wesley speaks of it as a "growth in grace".⁴ Just
 as justification and sanctification are God's work alone, so is the
 growth in perfection possible only through a continual dependence
 on Him. It is only through the power of God that the perfected are
⁵ kept for "one day or one hour". Notwithstanding all their holiness,
 without divine grace they would be nothing but "sin, darkness, hell".⁶
 However, because the bond between God and man is more intimate than
 ever before, those made perfect may grow in grace far swifter than
⁷ ever before.

The source of this grace is Christ. Therefore the perfected
 must constantly depend on him. This is tantamount to saying that
 the perfected still have need of the atonement of Christ; and
⁸
 Wesley acknowledges this to be true. Accordingly, we turn to
 the second way in which the doctrine

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1. Works vii, 202 "On Faith". Vide also Letters v, 189, May, 8, 1770, Ibid. viii, 184, Nov. 16, 1789.
 2. Vide Works vi, 5-6 "Christian Perfection", Notes Luke 2:52.
 3. Works xi, 426 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 4. Ibid. vi, 6 "Christian Perfection". Vide also ibid. vi, 509 "On Work-
 ing Out Our Own Salvation", ibid. vii, 237 "On The Discoveries Of
 Faith", ibid. viii, 65 "A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Re-
 ligion", ibid. ix, 310 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin", ibid. xi, 378f,
 402 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters iv, 100,
 June 27, 1760.
 5. Works x, 293 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 6. Ibid. xi, 417 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 7. Vide ibid. xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 8. Vide ibid. xi, 395f., 417f., 443 "A Plain Account Of Christian Per-
 fection", Letters iv, 167, Dec. 26, 1761, ibid. iv, 186, July 30, 1762,
ibid. iv, 189f., Sept. 15, 1762, ibid. iv, 191, Oct. 13, 1762, ibid. iv, 213,
 May 12, 1763, ibid. viii, 272, Mar. 20, 1762.

of perfection is constructed in order to guard against Antinomianism and to further holiness.

ii

Perfection Necessitates a Continual Dependence
upon the Atonement of Christ

The perfected have need of Christ as Mediator, first, as the source of light to the soul, as the fountain of grace by which they are "endued with power from on high".¹ For whatever grace is received, is received in consideration of the price he has paid. His atonement, as it were, has made available "perfecting" as well as justifying and sanctifying grace. Moreover, the grace made available is not only from him, but in him. He does not communicate life to man separate from, but in himself. Nor is man given a "stock"² of grace, laid up at the instant of full sanctification. Rather, grace is conceived as "... the power of Christ every moment resting upon us, whereby alone we are what we are ... and without which ... we should be devils the next moment".³ Wesley portrays the nature of the believer's relation to Christ in the Johannine figure of the vine and branch.

"For our perfection is not like that of a tree, which flourishes by the sap derived from its root, but ... like that of a branch which, united to the vine, bears fruit; but, severed from it, is dried up and withered".⁴

The perfected have need of Christ as Mediator, secondly, in his priestly office, as "their Atonement, their Advocate with the Father".⁵ Here Christ does not act to reconcile or restore man to

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1. Works vi, 398 "Of The Church". Vide also Letters v, 7, Apr. 1, 1766.
 2. Works xi, 417 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 3. Ibid. v, 167 "The Repentance Of Believers".
 4. Ibid. xi, 395-96 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. Ibid. xi, 417 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

the favour of God nor to deliver him from any guilt whatever.¹
Rather, the benefits of Christ are necessary to atone for defects
of conduct that transgress the law of perfect love. Although
technically these are not sins, yet they "... are all deviations²
from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement".
To argue that the perfected can stand before infinite justice with-
out a Mediator, betrays "... either the deepest ignorance, or the
highest arrogance and presumption".³ In other words, Wesley is
asserting that defects of holiness which are "non-moral" in
nature and pertain to things "not essential to salvation", yet need
the intercession of our Lord. "Therefore, ... as long as he
remains in the body, the greatest saint may say,

'Every moment, Lord, I need⁴
The merit of thy death'".

Wesley is in difficulty here. One need only note the
contradictory statements we have previously reported, that a
perfected believer fulfils the law of love, and that he must yet
pray to be forgiven for coming short of this law, to understand⁵
the dilemma in which Wesley finds himself. It manifests itself in
the present contradiction, that a believer needs the atonement
of Christ for sins that are not sin. Is not the logic of this as
follows?

(1) Wesley must say that Christ's atonement is effective for
sins that are not sin. For, is it not absurd to say that his death

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1. Vide Letters viii,272, Mar.20,1762, Works xi,418 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Works xi,396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 3. Ibid. xi,396 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 4. Ibid. x,327 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification".
 5. Vide ibid. xi,414ff. "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

atoned for defects of a "non-moral" nature, that are not essential to salvation"? Did he not die in order to offer men salvation from sin? In reality, is Christ's death an atonement for any thing other than sin? If so, what? Wesley's doctrine of the work of Christ gives no answer. If not, then since defects need Christ's atonement, they are sin. But Wesley asserts that they are not sin. (2) Or, alternatively, Wesley must say that perfection is really not salvation from all sin. For, granting that the defects of the perfected need Christ's atonement, and that Christ's death can only atone for sin, must not the defects for which they need the merits of his death be sinful? (3) Or, alternatively, Wesley must say that the perfected do not need the atonement of Christ. For, the perfected are sinless in that their defects of conduct are not sin, do not pertain to salvation and are of a non-moral nature. And since Christ's death can only atone for sin and has reference only to salvation, the perfected man does not need Christ's atonement.

Wesley rejects propositions two and three. We recall how vigorously he insists that perfection is salvation from all sin. He also writes that in the final issue he would sooner give up perfection than admit that the perfected do not need the benefits of the atonement of Christ.¹ Hence, he is in the position of having to say that in perfection Christ's atonement is effective for sins that are not sins, which is absurd.

He realized the logical difficulties of this position. In fact,² his friends took pains to point them out to him! Their root

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1. Vide Works xi, 418 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide Letters iv, 186, July 30, 1762, ibid. iv, 189, Sept. 15, 1762, ibid. viii, 272, Mar. 20, 1762, Works xi, 417-18 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

seems to lie in two things, first, in the definition of sin as a voluntary transgression of a known law. The word definition is used as distinguished from conception of sin. For the latter (as discussed in chapter one)¹ seem to hold no difficulties for our present point. It is only when Wesley says that perfected believers are sinless in that they willingly transgress no known law of God, that he gets into trouble. For obviously this definition is not wide enough to include all the offences to divine love and holiness of which even the saintliest of men are guilty. One may explain them in any way one chooses, derive them from infirmities of mind and body, from ignorance, etc. Yet, in God's sight they are sin. Wesley realized this. His apprehension of the holiness of God compelled him to affirm that even those made perfect cannot stand before God without intercession for their transgressions.

It is curious to find Wesley apparently guilty of a superficial definition of sin, especially when one contrasts his definition of sin with his larger conception of the evil that infects man's nature, and when one bears in mind the accent on sin that appears all through his theology, in particular in his doctrine of evangelical repentance. In fact, one feels that his definition of sin is deliberately formulated with the precise purpose of being able to say that the perfected are free from sin. This is gathered not only from the general tenor of his writings, but also from the contexts in which his definitions of sin frequently appear. This point leads us to the second root of Wesley's difficulty, namely, that he intentionally formulates his definition of sin in order to be able to be faithful to his apprehension of divine grace as able to make men sinless, in accord with the promises of Christianity. When his confidence in the promise and power of God to sanctify

1. Vide supra pp. 25-29.

man completely is translated into doctrine, Wesley affirms that man is saved from all sin. In response to this apprehension he defines sin in the manner we have ascribed.

Yet, joined with the apprehension of grace is the apprehension of divine holiness. As an acknowledgment of the perfect purity of God, Wesley is unwilling to say that even the perfected do not offend at all, and that their offences do not need Christ's atonement. This is a truth to be no less vigorously maintained than that divine love is able to cleanse man from all his iniquities. Hence, Wesley seeks to be simultaneously faithful to the holiness and love of God; and at the expense of logical consistency, affirms in one breath that the perfected need Christ's atonement for sin, and in another, that they are saved from all sin.

ii

Salvation is Conditional

The third way in which Wesley guards against Antinomianism and enforces the necessity of continual holiness, consists in an affirmation that salvation is ultimately conditional. It is noteworthy, however, that his opinion varied on this point. In his early thought, in 1725 and 1738, we find him writing that

"... an assurance that we shall persevere in a state of salvation ... I dare not affirm ... for I believe it is given to none at all. I find it not in the Book of God. Yea, I take it to be utterly contrary thereto, as implying the impossibility of falling from grace; from asserting which fatal doctrine I trust the God whom I serve will always deliver me".¹

Nevertheless, it so happened that he did come to assert this fatal doctrine. In 1743 he writes "that there is a state attainable in this life, from which man cannot finally fall ... And I do not deny that all those eminently styled The Elect will infallibly

1. Letters i, 225, Sept. 28, 1738. Vide also ibid. i, 22, July, 29, 1725, Journal ii, 83, Oct. 6, 1738.

persevere to the end".¹ It is probable that this opinion is a reflection of the strong sympathy with Calvinism that characterized the years immediately after his conversion. It also represents a concession made to Whitefield with whose Calvinist teaching he was trying to find a common point. This opinion was held until ca.1751-1752, when he "doubted of it more and more",² being finally convinced of his error by Charles Wesley and two associate ministers.³

His final position Wesley conceives to rest primarily on scripture. For " ... this question is attended with great difficulties; such as reason alone can never remove",⁴ and "arguments from experience will never determine ...".⁵ After reviewing at length the texts on which the issue can be decided,⁶ he concludes that a perfected believer who is holy even in the judgment of God Himself, may nevertheless so fall as to perish everlastingly. The evidence abundantly supports his rejection of final perseverance and his affirmation that final salvation is conditional.⁷ This conclusion Wesley found

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1. Journal iii, 86, Aug. 24, 1743. Vide also Works xiii, 508 "Calvinistic Controversy".
 2. Letters iii, 96, Aug. 8, 1752. "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints" was first published in 1751, "Predestination Calmly Considered", in 1752; in both of these final perseverance is repudiated. Vide Works xi, 251f., 296ff.
 3. Vide Letters v, 38-9, Jan. 27, 1767, ibid. v, 41, Feb. 12, 1767.
 4. Works x, 285 "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints".
 5. Ibid. x, 242 "Predestination Calmly Considered".
 6. The following passages are consulted. Lev. 26:3ff; Ezek. 18:4, 24, 26; 33:13, 18; Matt. 5:13; 12:43-45; 24:10; 18:35; Luke 21:34; John 6:51; 15:1-6; 17:12; Rom. 11:17, 20-22; I Cor. 1:8-9; 10:3ff., 13; II Cor. 6:1; Gal. 5:14-15; 6:9; Eph. 4:30; II Thess. 3:2-3; I Tim. 1:18-19; II Pet. 2:20-21; 3:17; I John 2:15; Rev. 3:11. Vide Works x, 242ff. "Predestination Calmly Considered", ibid. x, 284ff. "Serious Thoughts Upon The Perseverance Of The Saints", ibid. xi, 442 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 7. In addition to the passages cited, vide Works v, 301 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-iv", ibid. vi, 419 "On Perfection", ibid. vi, 526-27 "A Call To Backsliders", ibid. xi, 426ff. "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection", Letters iii, 170-71, Mar. 12, 1756, ibid. v, 185, Mar. 15, 1770, ibid. v, 273, Aug. 14, 1771, ibid. vii, 58, Apr. 10, 1781, ibid. vii, 248, Nov. 7, 1784, ibid. viii, 159, Aug. 3, 1789, Journal ii, 483, Aug. 1, 1741, ibid. vi, 32-3, July 25, 1774, Notes John 15:14; I Tim. 1:19; Heb. 10:38.

to be verified in experience. He writes that "hardly one in ten,
nay, one in thirty"¹, continue in perfection for a year; that
"hardly three in five of those that are either justified or
sanctified keep the gift of God a year to an end"². This is not to
say, however, that the loss of the blessing of perfection is
"necessary" or "... unavoidable - it may be lost, but it may be
kept. Accordingly we have some in every part of the kingdom who
have never been moved from their steadfastness"³.

Therefore, in affirming that perfection is a growth in grace,
that the sanctified have need of the merits of Christ, and that
final salvation is conditional, Wesley formulates his doctrine in
order to insist on continual holiness and to guard against
Antinomianism.

VI

Are There Believers Who Are Perfected?

We close our discussion of the doctrine of perfection with an
inquiry into the facts to which Wesley appealed to support it.
The question is invariably asked of one who espouses perfection:
"Can you show one such example" of perfection? "Where is he that is
perfect"⁴? For us the question takes a slightly different form:
Did Wesley assert that there were people living who were perfected?
Did Wesley himself ever claim to be perfected?

In replying, Wesley urges the sceptic to be sincere in his
inquiry. Far too often he is like Herod; he seeks the young child
only to slay it. Moreover, to point out certain people as perfected

1. Letters v, 185, Mar. 15, 1770.

2. Ibid. v, 273, Aug. 14, 1771.

3. Ibid. v, 189, May, 8, 1770.

4. Works xi, 391 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

would inevitably cause them much embarrassment, setting them up as "marks for all to shoot at". Wesley would prefer to rejoin, "do you doubt that God's grace is able to make a man perfect? Is not your natural slowness and unreadiness of heart the reason why you do not believe in the work of God"?¹ Nevertheless, one who appeals to experience to corroborate a doctrine as frequently as Wesley cannot evade the crucial question, "Where is he that is perfect?"

Wesley replies, after having cited the Biblical promises of perfection:

"Agreeable to this is the plain matter of fact. Several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without any interruption, for many years. Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath..."²

He admits that there aren't many such examples of "fathers in Christ!"³

"The generality of believers in our Church ... are certainly no more than babes in Christ; not young men, and much less fathers. But we have some ..." ⁴

Allowing for all apostates, there remains a number of souls who beyond question are perfect as Wesley understands the term. His writings are scattered with references to perfected people.⁵ Moreover, he is so convinced that doctrine is

verified in fact, as to write: "... if I were certain there are none

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1. Vide Works viii, 296-97 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. xi, 391 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Ibid. vi, 420 "On Perfection".
 3. Vide ibid. vi, 419 "On Perfection", ibid. vi, 6 "Christian Perfection", ibid. x, 350 "Some Remarks On A Defence Of Aspasio Vindicated".
 4. Letters v, 221, June 1, 1776.
 5. Vide Letters iv, 71-2, Aug. 22, 1759, ibid. iv, 167, Dec. 26, 1761, ibid. iv, 186, July 30, 1762, ibid. v, 6, Mar. 29, 1766, ibid. v, 175, Jan. 2, 1770, ibid. vii, 98, Jan. 17, 1782, ibid. vii, 103, Jan. 19, 1782, ibid. vii, 219, May, 11, 1784, ibid. vii, 263, Mar. 26, 1785, ibid. viii, 184, Nov. 16, 1789, ibid. viii, 188, Nov. 26, 1789, Journal iv, 343, Aug. 2, 1759, ibid. iv, 372, Mar. 12, 1760, Works xi, 409ff. "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

such, I must have done this doctrine". "Convince me of this, and I will preach it no more ... if there are none made perfect yet, God has not sent me to preach perfection"¹.

Wesley anticipates a further objection the sceptic invariably makes:²"Do not the perfected deceive themselves?" He replies that frequently they do, and often urges believers to "beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm. O keep at the utmost distance from it! Give no place to a heated imagination"³. His statements concerning those who are deceived, however, are too unguarded. He does not hesitate to say that self-deception is a "harmless mistake"; though he immediately qualifies it by adding, "while"one "feels nothing but love in" one's "heart"⁴. Wesley asks simply, What is objectionable about a believer's fancying himself to be filled with love? If such love be love of God and man, wherein lies the danger? In cases of deception one is not to judge too harshly; rather, one should rejoice in the power of grace that temporarily occasions such a "mistake".

The test of the genuineness of perfection consists in an appeal to the believer's experience of what has taken place in his soul from the time of justification onwards. "'To feel all love and no sin'" is not sufficient proof. The believer must first have experienced a far deeper and **clearer conviction of inbred sin than before** justification; then, secondly, " ... after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God ..."; thirdly, there must be " ... added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification"⁵. One

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1. Works xi, 405-06 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Vide ibid. xi, 401f. "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 3. Ibid. xi, 429 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 4. Ibid. xi, 405 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 5. Ibid. xi, 401-02 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".

will notice Wesley's emphasis on experience. It is significant that this test is not even primarily ethical. It is experiential. Once again he is affirming the validity of the human consciousness for apprehending the reality of God's life in the soul of man. He credits this type of experiential test with such infallibility as to write of one who asserts that he has fulfilled it: "... I judge it as as impossible this man should be deceived herein, as God should lie".¹

In the last analysis, however, cases of deception do not invalidate the truth of the doctrine of perfection: "... the abuse of this, or any other scriptural doctrine, does by no means destroy its use. Neither can the unfaithfulness of man, perverting his right way, make the promise of God of no effect. No: Let God be true, and every man a liar. The word of the Lord, it shall stand. 'Faithful is he that hath promised'".²

Finally, did Wesley himself ever personally claim to be perfected? The evidence compels a negative answer. First, he never explicitly claims to be perfected. Secondly, the only passage in his writings (so far as can be discovered) that can be construed as support for the belief that he did claim perfection,³ does not

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1. Works xi, 302 "A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection".
 2. Ibid. vi, 39 "Satan's Devices".
 3. The passage is found in his Journal: "... the next day I was again as a dead man; but in the evening, while I was reading prayers at Snowfields, I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought, as well as action or word, just as it was rising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride or selfishness. I never knew before (I mean not as at this time) what it was 'to be still before God'. Tues. 25. -- I waked, by grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence of God as greatly confirmed me therein: so that God was before me all the day long. I sought and found Him in every place; and could truly say, when I lay down at night, 'Now I have lived a day!'. Vol. iii, 157, Dec. 23-25, 1744. The only other possible suggestion that Wesley felt himself to be perfected is found in a letter of 1756; in his dissent from a statement made by J. Hervey in the thirteenth dialogue of his Theron And Aspasio, that "the best of men" frequently feel disorder in their affections, that when they would do good they find evil present with them. Wesley writes: "I believe not. You and I are only able to answer for ourselves". Letters iii, 380, Oct. 15. At the best this is inexplicit; and one is in doubt whether or not Wesley is speaking of his personal feeling, or of a doctrinal position.

mention the word "perfection". Nor does its content correspond to the content of his doctrine. Nor, apparently, does he refer back to this experience afterwards. If it had been an experience of the act of perfection, it seems reasonable to suppose that it would have lingered in his mind as a kind of second spiritual birthday, analogous to his conversion experience of May, 1738, which always existed in his mind as an event from which to date events in his ministry.

The statement that Wesley seems never to have enjoyed the experience of perfection, rests thirdly on his explicit disavowal of its attainment. To one who attacks him for arriving "in his own imagination, to a sinless perfection", he replies: "I never told you so, nor any one else. I no more imagine that I have already attained, that I already love God with all my heart, soul, and strength, than that I am in the third heaven"¹. To another who unfairly accused him of claiming perfection, he answers: "I have told all the world that I am not perfect ... Will you force it upon me in spite of my teeth?"²

It seems, therefore, that Wesley himself never enjoyed the blessing he coveted for others.

It may not be inappropriate to end the expository chapters of this thesis with the following quotation, which in more than one sense is characteristic of the mind of Wesley.

"After I have thus successfully preached to others, still I myself may be a castaway. I may, in the hand of God, snatch many souls from hell, and yet drop into it when I have done. I may bring others to the kingdom of heaven, and yet myself never enter there. Reader, if God hath ever blessed my word to thy soul, pray that he may be merciful to me a sinner!"³

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1. Letters ii, 140, Mar. 22, 1748.
 2. Ibid. v, 43, Mar. 5, 1767. Vide also a letter, ibid. iv, 190, Sept. 15, 1762, which ends with the exhortation: "O let you and I go to perfection! God grant we may so run as to attain!"
 3. Works v, 425 "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount-xiii". Vide also Notes Matt. 7: 23.

Chapter VIII

I

Introduction

It will be recalled that in the preface, the scope of this thesis was defined as an attempt to ascertain and record the content of Wesley's theology as a theology of salvation. Our primary concern, as it were, has been to get at the facts. But our work would be incomplete without some effort to gather together in a coherent form the conclusions to which our study has led. This chapter may therefore be termed a concluding - as distinguished from a critical - essay, in that it seeks to review on the basis of the facts reported, some of the features of Wesley's theology that emerge as most significant.

That this study has been entitled The Soteriology of John Wesley, however, suggests that we set ourselves a more pointed task. One would concede that the interest Wesley holds for any student lies mainly in the power of his thought to initiate the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century, a movement whose "unprecedented" and "unparalleled success" "... has affected almost every other church for good", "has stimulated the thought of every other system", and "has transformed the world's conception of the nature and basis of religion".¹ In other words, the purpose of this essay is to study how and why Wesley's theology could so successfully recover life for God, to ascertain the sources of the power of the Wesleyan revival. It is of course recognized that history had well prepared the stage for the appearance of the Wesleys, Whitefield and their colleagues, and for the subsequent revival in the Anglican church. Hardly if ever before had circumstances been so favourable for a revival. Yet, at the

1. W.A.Curtis' article on Confessions in H.E.R.E. iii, 885-86.

least one must grant with C.J. Abbey that in whatever age Wesley had lived, he would have been a powerful minister in the work of evangelization.¹ And we are prepared to defend the thesis that it was mainly the genius of Wesley himself, moulding into a theology the essential truths of historic Christianity, that peculiarly made possible the eighteenth century revival.

II

Practically all interpreters of Wesley agree that his genius does not lie in his creativeness. The psychologist tells us there is little evidence that either as a boy or man he planned or wrote anything original.² The historian tells us that he distinctly was not an "originator".³ Theologians agree that his mind was receptive and synthetic, not creative, that none of his doctrines was new.⁴ One speaks of "the heterogeneous mass"⁵ of his doctrine. Others more charitably disposed speak of it as "eclectic only in the best sense",⁶ as a "masterful synthesis".⁷ Even the more distinctive conceptions of Christian perfection and the witness of the Spirit are regarded as recoveries of doctrines well known in historic Christianity. Such unanimity of opinion confirms a conclusion we may draw from our own study, that Wesley's formal theology is a system whose component doctrines are drawn from other minds. But to say that his thought is not original, is not to explain away his genius. On the contrary, it in a large measure

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1. Vide C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, The English Church In The Eighteenth Century pp. 3f., 6-7, 313ff.
 2. Vide S.G. Dimond, The Psychology Of The Methodist Revival p. 47.
 3. Vide N. Curnock's Introduction to the Journal i, 6.
 4. Vide O.A. Curtis, The Christian Faith, p. 374; A New History Of Methodism ii, 422, 425, 434.
 5. I. Taylor, Wesley And Methodism p. 232
 6. W.B. Pope, A Compendium Of Christian Theology p. 13.
 7. G.C. Cell, The Rediscovery Of John Wesley p. 266.

accounts for it. In support of this contention we undertake a formulation of the first answer to the question posed as the theme of this chapter. The effectiveness of Wesley's theology of redemption, first, is due to the remarkable manner in which he preserves in a kind of theological equilibrium certain truths of historic Christian thought.

Despite the synthetic character of his thought, however, we must point out here that ultimately his adoption of these truths is intelligible only in light of a certain apprehension of the nature of Christianity that he personally brought to all his theological procedure. It may be admitted that the most significant thing about a synthesis is the point of view that prompts and governs its construction. Ultimately, therefore, it is the distinctive^{ly}/Wesleyan point of view in obedience to which his theology is composed and modified, that most interests us. But in order to approach it most effectively, we use as an adumbration Wesley's points of affinity with historic Christian thought.

i

The first truth Wesley shares with historic Christian thought is a recognition of the reality of sin in man. We cannot have traversed the content of his theology without noting his persistent, unremitting accent on sin and on its offence to divine holiness. It appears most vividly in the doctrine of man as an object of redemption. However, it also underlies the doctrine of the atonement which affirms that our Lord's death was a sacrifice for the sins of the world to the punitive justice of God; and the doctrine of repentance which is defined as knowledge of one's sinful self. His acknowledgment of the reality of sin also forces

Wesley to assert that divine justice is as operative as divine love in justification, that original sin is the foundation of Θεραπεία ψυχῆς in regeneration. In sanctification the admission of the persistent reality of sin takes the form of a doctrine of "evangelical repentance", which, together with faith, progressively induces holiness. Finally, although Christian perfection is salvation from sin in terms of Wesley's definition, we recall his refusal to say that the perfected believer does not need the benefit of Christ's atonement for transgressions of the law of love.

It is necessary that we make a distinction between Wesley's accent on the reality of sin and his conception of sin. (For, his definition of sin is not only at fault, as was suggested in the previous chapter.) It is likely that his conception of the nature of sin as it infects man is also defective, as critics have suggested.¹ At times he seems almost to conceive sin as a physical growth, as a kind of tumor which infects man. Wesley's statement, for example, that of necessity there must be a last moment of sin's existence and a first moment of deliverance from it, betrays not only a misapplication of logic, but a view of the nature of sin incongruous with his firm acknowledgment of its reality. Yet, one may have inaccurate views of what one knows to be indubitable; and the faultiness of Wesley's conception (and definition) of sin hardly detracts from his recognition of its vast reality.

Wesley himself clearly perceived his affinity with historic Christian thought on the point of sin. He chooses to place him-

1. Vide R.N. Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology pp. 332-36; O.A. Curtis, The Christian Faith pp. 199, 378; E.H. Sugden, The Standard Sermons Of John Wesley ii, 459.

self with Calvin and Arminius; although ultimately his views¹ are in sympathy with Luther and Augustine. We remember his admission that he thinks on original sin just as Calvin and Arminius do.² We also remember those "edges" in the doctrine of man where his concern to enforce the Adamic corruption of human nature causes him to lean over into Calvinist determinism. It is fair to say that Wesley is faithful to Reformed thought on the point of sin to the extent, indeed, of admitting explicitly and implicitly his sympathy with its most vigorous exponent, Calvin.

The same observation applies to the second key truth he shares with Protestant thought in general and with Calvin in particular, with whom he again chooses to align himself, that salvation is wrought alone by the grace of God. One cannot have studied Wesley's soteriology without acknowledging as its main theme the promise and the power of grace. At every stage of salvation it is apparent that man feels "a continual sense of total dependence on God", beginning with the doctrine of prevenient grace through which salvation is undertaken. Even repentance, and the faith through

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1. Vide W.B.Pope, A Compendium Of Christian Theology p.247; J.S.Lidgett, The Fatherhood Of God p.332; G.C.Cell, The Rediscovery Of John Wesley p.276f; I.Taylor, Wesley And Methodism p.47.
 2. Works x,359 "What Is An Arminian"? Wesley is hardly accurate in this statement, as it is impossible to believe simultaneously as Arminius and Calvin do and remain consistent. For it appears that they differ slightly on the doctrine of original sin, although one must acknowledge with Wesley, on the other hand, that there is less opposition between their views than is generally supposed. It seems, however, that Wesley is more Calvinist than Arminian in at least one respect: in saying that man is chargeable for the sin of Adam as well as for the condemnation attached to his own sin. Furthermore, despite the doctrine of preventing grace which technically designates Wesley as Arminian, he is really Calvinist in the idea that led him to adopt this doctrine, i.e. to derive all power for the salvation of depraved and impotent man from God. But even in terms purely of doctrine, Wesley differs from Arminianism in making preventing grace both the solitary and primary source of salvation. On this last point see C. Hodge, Systematic Theology ii, 329-30.

which man is saved, are wrought alone by God.¹ Similarly, Wesley specifically asserts that justification, regeneration, adoption, the witness of the Spirit, sanctification and perfection, are alone the work of grace. In fact, we found in chapter two that the doctrine of the persons of the Trinity, instead of being formulated after the manner of speculative theology, was moulded in response to the question: How do these constitute and minister saving grace to man? Our study provides a verification of the statement made by H. Watkin-Jones: "... John Wesley constantly, indeed almost exclusively, thought of the Trinity as God in action for the salvation of man ..."²

Accordingly, when one bears in mind the operations of grace as we have elucidated them in our expository chapters, one can understand what Wesley means when he writes that his theology comes "to the very edge of Calvinism": "(1) In ascribing all good to the free grace of God. (2) In denying all natural free will, and all power antecedent to grace. And, (3) in excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the grace of God".³ We have underlined the words, "good", "power" and "merit". Certainly these are the key words of Calvinism. If one be mainly concerned

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1. I.A. Dorner is hardly just to Wesleyan theology when he maintains that in the experience of justification, forgiveness is derived so much from the human act of repentance and faith that it is practically independent of divine grace made available by the atonement of Christ. Dorner has not understood the profound extent to which Wesley attributed the whole of salvation - including repentance and faith - to grace. This is a fairly common misconstruction of Wesleyan theology. Consult Dorner's System of Christian Doctrine iv, 212-13.
 2. The Holy Spirit From Arminius to Wesley p. 114.
 3. Works viii, 285 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations". Italics mine.

for the underlying principles of Calvinism, as distinguished from its doctrines, clearly one can claim Wesley as Calvinist in his conception of grace, always excepting, of course, the doctrine of the irresistibility of grace where he turns Arminian.

It is interesting to observe how his sympathy with the Reformation ideas of grace and sin leads him to an admission of sympathy with their correlative doctrines. He writes in one place or another that on the points of the merits of Christ as alone the cause of salvation; ¹ of ² repentance and faith; of the imputed righteousness of Christ; ³ and on the doctrine of justification ⁴ in toto, he thinks just as Luther or Calvin does. Perhaps the strongest evidence in support of Wesley's debt to Reformed thought is his admission that its fundamental doctrines, summarized in the text, "By grace are ye saved through faith", are the doctrines of the eighteenth century revival. In 1746 he writes that the gospel has run "as fire among stubble" since ⁵ 1738, when he first began preaching this truth; and in 1750, that "the old doctrines of the Reformation" have seemed quite ⁶ new in the world. It seems, therefore, that Wesley himself consciously and deliberately derived much - if not most - of his theology from the early Reformers.

ii

Yet, one is unable to say that his theology is pure Lutheranism or Calvinism. As a synthesis it clearly rests upon the

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1. Vide Works x, 391 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 2. Vide Letters iii, 246, Jan. 6, 1758.
 3. Vide Works v, 240-41 "The Lord Our Righteousness", ibid. x, 339 "Preface To A Treatise On Justification".
 4. Vide Letters iv, 298, May, 14, 1765, Works vii, 454 "True Christianity Defended", ibid. x, 391 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".
 5. Letters ii, 264, June 17, 1746.
 6. Ibid. iii, 291, June, 8, 1750. Vide also Works vii, 454 "True Christianity Defended".

two key truths of Reformation thought, sin and grace. But it bears certain modifications that are Arminian.

Before discussing Wesley's Arminianism, however, we must clear up a difficulty that centres in the word, "Arminian". Carelessly used, it is applied indiscriminately to what is known as the Arminian tradition in theology. Often when used in this sense (as it was frequently in the eighteenth century), "Arminianism" is made broad enough to include semi-Pelagianism, Socinianism, etc. These are, however, corruptions of "Arminianism" as understood in a second sense, i.e. as referring to the original theological tenets of Jacobus Arminius himself. It is in this latter sense¹ that Wesley asks to be considered Arminian.² It is not improbable that he explicitly dissociated himself from the former meaning of the word and referred back to original Arminianism, mainly because he perceived what is really a genuine sympathy between Arminius and Calvin, a sympathy frequently lost sight of by those who mistake corrupt for original Arminianism.² One must beware of making too sharp a cleavage between original Arminianism and Reformed thought. For although Arminianism in the pure sense is a check to the exaggeration of Reformed thought as found in Calvin, a protest on behalf of the principle of human responsibility in salvation, it is yet in fundamental sympathy with the truths on which Protestantism was founded. It is a via media.

In this sense it is used by Wesley. The word "used" is chosen advisedly. One feels that he employs Arminianism as a device to preserve his theology from what have been conveniently - if

1. Vide Works x, 358ff. "What Is An Arminian"?

2. This is suggested by his statement that he, Arminius, Calvin and Whitefield, think precisely alike on original sin and justification by faith. Vide Works x, 359 "What Is An Arminian"?

ambiguously - called the "harsher peculiarities of Calvinism",¹ to mediate between the sovereignty of grace and the necessity of human responsibility in salvation. He seems to use Arminianism in the way it is meant to be used, always conscious on the one hand of the dangers of semi-Pelagianism, and on the other, of the perils of excessive Calvinism.

The precise place of Arminianism in Wesley's theology was mainly defined by experience. It is true that its most distinctive (though not all its), points characterized his thought from his earliest years.² But never, apparently, does he refer explicitly to Arminianism until ca. 1745, while on the other hand one finds frequent admissions of his debt to the early Reformers dating from 1738 (and before), the year of his conversion. Our point is, that Wesley seems personally to derive the initial impulse and energy of the revival from the truths he consciously shared with Reformed rather than with Arminian thought. As was suggested in chapter three, he was so convinced of the Reformation truth that salvation is by grace alone in his own conversion, that on the principal doctrines (always with the exception of predestination) he felt himself to be in accord with Reformed theology. This is verified not only by the manner in which he increasingly restrains his excessive Calvinism by the use of Arminianism (which we shall consider in detail presently); but also by important statements he makes in 1744³ and 1772,⁴ that in the years immediately following his conversion he leaned too far toward Calvinism.

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1. H.C. Sheldon, History Of Christian Doctrine ii, 263.
 2. For example, consult Letters i, 22-3, July 29, 1725, where he writes to his mother his objections to predestination.
 3. Vide Works viii, 268 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. viii, 337 "Minutes Of Several Conversations".
 4. Vide ibid. x, 403 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Review".

We do not get at the root of the matter, however, when we merely say that Wesley's Arminianism is essentially a restraint imposed upon his Calvinism by the lessons of experience. We must press further and ask, How did this happen? Where in particular did he modify his thought? What was his Arminianism? In answering these questions we are carried beyond the confines of this section to the next, which deals with the distinctively Wesleyan character of his thought. His points of departure from Calvinism not only suggest Arminianism, but compel us to make clear the underlying point of view that dictated his use both of Arminianism and Calvinism. In other words, now that we have roughly surveyed the sources in historic thought from which Wesley drew the key ideas of his synthesis, we examine the point of view that governed its construction.

III

This point of view is not primarily doctrinal nor theological. It is more of the nature of an intuitive apprehension of the holiness and love of God,¹ and an acknowledgment that these two attributes correlatively prevail in the salvation of man. Ultimately, Wesley's procedure in doctrine is determined by his personal apprehension of the nature of God as revealed in Christ. We shall write at greater length of the manner in which this apprehension underlies his entire system of thought. Our concern here is to state it, and then study his dealings with Calvinism and Arminianism in light of it. For purposes of exposition we consider first the way in which Wesley's feeling for the

1. It will be noted that the phrase, "the apprehension of God as love and as holy", occurs frequently in this essay. "Love" is used as a substantive, "holy" as an adjective, in order to suggest the significance of Wesley's remark: "God is often styled holy... but not holiness in the abstract, as He is said to be love..." Notes I John 4:8.

the holiness of God controls the construction of his synthesis.

i

One interpreter has intimated the motive that governed the formulation of his theology by writing that "his Arminianism was founded" on "his moral intuitions ..."¹ This statement suggests that Wesley's Arminian divergencies were prompted by a recognition of the dangers that inevitably attend the proclamation of the Reformed truth that men are saved by grace alone. The force with which this truth made impact upon Wesley in his own conversion experience undoubtedly accentuated his sympathy with it, and it was mainly to defend it from perversion that he inclined more and more toward Arminianism. This is most convincingly illustrated by a change of mind on three crucial points, which reflects a broad tendency from excessive Calvinism toward Arminianism. First, he forsook a belief in a doctrine of final perseverance (unconditional salvation) when he saw that it was conducive to Antinomianism. Secondly, he lightened his emphasis on (and renounced any further use of the phrase,) the imputed "righteousness of Christ", as it² caused "unwary hearers to slide into Antinomianism", and came to stress justification more as simply forgiveness. Thirdly, in order to enforce the necessity of human responsibility in salvation (provoked by Quietism and Antinomianism), he came to allow that good works could be performed before justification, although he never

1. J.H. Rigg, The Living Wesley. p. 95.

2. Vide supra p.155f.

conceded that they were meritorious. Because God works in man, man can and must work. The first of these is explicitly a change from Calvinism to Arminianism; the latter two closely imply Arminianism. All three represent modifications of Reformed doctrine in order to avoid Antinomianism. The desire to avoid Antinomianism, it hardly need be added, springs from a concern to be faithful to the holiness of God.

This concern, however, also dictated in part certain specifically Arminian doctrines that characterized Wesley's thought from the beginning. All cluster about the central and crucial one, predestination. On this point Wesley always was Arminian. In fact, one feels that Arminianism was practically identified in his mind with a repudiation of predestination. (He writes, for example, in a characteristic sentence, " ... I am an Arminian, an election-doubter."¹) It was doubtless his sympathy with this fundamental distinction between Arminianism and Calvinism that led him to embrace its ancillary doctrines, the universality of the benefits of the atonement, preventing grace and the resistibleness of grace. The motive that impelled him to reject predestination, also impelled him to affirm that although Christ died for all, man may yet reject the grace his death has made available through the freedom of choice supernaturally restored to his corrupted will. In large measure (though not entirely as we shall see presently,) Wesley rejected predestination and its correlative doctrines because they were conducive to Antinomianism. All of the criticism we found him

1. Works x, 417 "Some Remarks On Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled".

levelling at them in chapter two because of the peril they offer to holiness, supports our point. We need not labour it. It is fair to say that both the Arminian sympathies that characterized Wesley's theology from its inception, and the Arminian modifications he came to adopt as experience necessitated, sprang from the conviction that the unrestrained Calvinism, to which they were opposed, vitiated the holiness without which no man can see God.

We feel bound, however, to point out once more that Wesley is hardly fair in his representation of "the whole absurdity and blasphemy" of predestination.¹ Yet, one can with consistency arrive by logic at the severe interpretation he places on this doctrine, particularly when driven by a conviction well put in the words, "I dread every approach to Antinomianism."² In any case, he was sincere in his attack. A sympathetic critic who has noted this point, writes: "...if Methodism be guilty of exaggeration and misrepresentation in its conception of the signification and implications of the Calvinistic doctrine ... its motive is of the highest, its purpose is intensely practical, and its own phenomenal success has vindicated it."³

Wesley's use of Arminianism to check excessive Calvinism, then, reflects his apprehension that although God saves man through grace alone, His holiness must also always be reckoned with. We are not faithful to the centrality of this conception in Wesley's mind, however, if we interpret it only in light of the Arminian modifications of his theology. For it finds expression in doctrines that are

1. Letters v, 344, Nov. 4, 1772.

2. Ibid. v, 91, May 23, 1768.

3. W.A. Curtis, article on Confessions in H.E.R.E. iii, 885. For a less charitable comment on Wesley's misrepresentation of Calvinism, see W. Cunningham, Historical Theology ii, 478.

as much Reformed as Arminian, that bear, however, a distinctively Wesleyan impress. We mean, the doctrines of regeneration and sanctification. It is not necessary to write again of Wesley's realization of the perils of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone; of his unwavering insistence that justification must always be accompanied by the new birth and followed by progressive sanctification; that faith issue in works; that imputed righteousness issue in inherent righteousness. All of his insistence that man experience the "vast inward change" of regeneration, that there ensue an unceasing struggle against sin in sanctification, supports our point. At the same time it provides an answer to those who accuse Wesley's theology of moral shallowness.¹ It may not be amiss to state here that more than one scholar sees in this emphasis on inward holiness,² a definite affinity with the piety of Roman Catholicism. But no matter from whence he derived it, to whatever point of historic Christian thought it be traced, Wesley's concern for holiness is inseparably joined with the Reformation truth that salvation is by grace through faith. In this synthesis, balanced by the Arminian modifications we have cited - in particular that man is responsible for his own salvation -, we are face to face with one of our most significant answers to the question posed as the theme of this essay: To what in

1. Vide S. Baring-Gould, The Evangelical Revival pp. 54, 105, 113, 131, and passim; I.A. Dorner, History of Protestant Theology ii, 93f.
2. Vide G.C. Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley p. 347ff. This is particularly apparent in the study of the Wesleyan revival written by a Roman Catholic, P. Maximin Piette, La Reaction de John Wesley dans l'Evolution du Protestantisme. Father Piette interprets Wesleyanism as a profound reaction from the Lutheran theology of justification and the Calvinist theology of predestination. At the same time, the revival is conceived as a re-expression of the Roman Catholic emphasis on inward holiness, la vie interieure. The latter is perhaps most clearly seen in the biographical treatment of Wesley's years as a student and fellow at Oxford, the years in which he was particularly sympathetic toward mysticism and the Roman Catholic ideas of grace and worship: see pp. 355ff., 577. See also pp. v, vi of the preface, and pp. 585, 602ff., 647-48.

Wesley's theology is due to the power of the Methodist revival to redeem and transform human life?

It is noteworthy that Wesley himself realized that the difference between his own doctrine and that of purely Reformed thought as found in Luther, was verified in the ethical quality of the lives of their converts. At least five times he refers to Luther's melancholy remark that a religious revival seldom lasts long, that even though many people seem reformed in their lives and tempers they lapse back into sin.¹ But, he adds, blessed be God, this does not prevail in the present revival. For "the people called Methodists" take care not to put asunder what God has joined together: "... the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other; being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee."²

In accord with our previous remark, however, ultimately Wesley's dealings with Arminian and Reformed thought, issuing in the synthesis we have described, are best understood in light of his personal apprehension of the holiness of God. It is this that makes his theology truly a synthesis and not a mere pot-pourri. "In reality, with Wesley holiness was not a theory", not a set of doctrines adopted as circumstances necessitated, "but an experience, a life",³ to communicate which he not only wrote theology but undertook the revival that bears his name. In reply to the question, "What was the rise of Methodism, so-called?", he writes, referring to himself

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1. Vide Works vi, 282 "The General Spread Of The Gospel", ibid. vi, 329 "The Wisdom of God's Counsels", ibid. vii, 77 "On Family Religion", ibid. vii, 163 "Of Former Times", Letters vi, 339, Feb. 12, 1779.
 2. Works vii, 205 "On God's Vineyard".
 3. H.B. Workman, A New History of Methodism i, 32.

and his brother Charles: "In 1729, two young men, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others to do so. In 1737 they saw holiness comes by faith ... but still holiness was their point. God then thrust them out, utterly against their will, to raise a holy people". Referring to the experience which forced him to modify his doctrine, he continues "When Satan could no otherwise hinder this, he threw Calvinism in the way; and then Antinomianism, which strikes directly at the root of all holiness"¹. One really has here the heart of the matter. Wesley derives the purpose of his ministry from a desire "to spread holiness over the land"².

His testimony has been confirmed by posterity. The historian of Methodism writes that holiness was the key idea of his activity as churchman and evangelist,³ in obedience to which he undertook the revival that issued in the institution of Methodism. The student of the psychology of the Methodist revival writes that when viewed in relation to other revivals, its distinctive feature is a marked ethical quality which made the emotional disturbance of conversion in the vast majority of cases a decisive factor in the formation of a higher type of character.⁴ As those who believe that the root of all is to be found in Wesley's theology, we listen to the following:

"Wesley was the central point of Christian consciousness in a special doctrinal epoch. Historically, Wesley had almost the same epochal relation to the doctrinal emphasis upon holiness that Luther had to the doctrinal emphasis upon justification by faith, or that Athanasius had to the doctrinal emphasis upon the Deity of our Lord",⁵

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1. Works viii, 300 "Minutes Of Several Conversations".
 2. Letters vi, 113, Sept. 16, 1774.
 3. Vide W.J. Townsend, A New History Of Methodism i, 81.
 4. Vide S.G. Dimond The Psychology Of The Methodist Revival p. 135.
 5. O. A. Curtis, The Christian Faith p. 373.

The second controlling motive that governs Wesley's attitude toward Arminianism and Calvinism, is his apprehension of the primacy of love in God's nature and in His redemption of man. This conception more profoundly underlies his thought than any other. It is the a priori truth from which he sets out. When translated into theology, it directly accounts for his sympathy with certain elements of Reformed thought we have discussed, justification by faith, the righteousness and merits of Christ, etc. But as these are corollaries of, so is Wesley's sympathy fundamentally with the Reformation idea of grace as alone the source of all good and power. One sees this most clearly of course in the avowal that his doctrine of grace comes to "the very edge" of Calvinism. On the other hand, his feeling for the character of divine love compels him to abandon Calvinist doctrine at the point of irresistible grace. In other words, Wesley's Arminian variations from Calvinism again illustrate how the apprehension of God as redemptive love controls the formulation of his theology.

This is verified when we cite once more the distinguishing points on which he chooses to be considered Arminian, the most important of which is predestination. It is not necessary to review the evidence reported in chapter two in our elucidation of Wesley's criticism of this doctrine. The unquestioned fact emerges: his hostility to predestination springs from the conviction that it injures the Christian apprehension that redemptive love controls all God's relations with man; as much if not more, one feels, than from the correlative conviction that it is conducive to Antinomianism, which similarly violates the Christian apprehension that God

is holy. This is apparent in further Arminian modifications, in particular, that the benefit of Christ's atonement is universal. Wesley believed that to deny that Christ died for all men is to deny that God loves all men, which is as false to the conception of God as essentially love, as actual predestination. The doctrine of preventing grace bears this same character. It represents an admission that no man - not even the most sinful - is devoid of a measure of divine love. Even with the sentence of death resting upon him for his sin, man is the object of God's compassion. To assert that the natural corruption of man is unrelieved by at least a degree of grace, is untrue to what Wesley believed to be God's essential nature, forgiving, beseeching love.

Both the doctrines of the universal benefit of Christ's atonement and of preventing grace, however, are ultimately subordinate to the crucial point of predestination. Wesley's rejection of this doctrine and assertion of its Arminian counterpart, are dictated by a desire to preserve the primacy of love in God's nature and in His relation with man as Redeemer. Where Calvinism interprets God's love in terms of His sovereignty, Wesley interprets God's sovereignty in terms of His love. His final attitude toward Calvinism and Arminianism is epitomized in his definition of grace as "free in all" and "free for all".¹ His Calvinist sympathy is revealed in the former, in which he is saying that saving grace, which is love, is independent of any merit or power in man. His Arminian affinity is apparent in the latter, in which he is affirming that it is available for all men, limited by no predestinating decree. In the synthesis of these two emphases, Arminian and Calvinist, Wesley defines the nature of that love which he believes to prevail in God's redemption of man.

1. Vide Works vii, 373 "Free Grace".

We are not just to Wesley's theology, however, if we allow his intuition that love is the heart of divine reality, to be illuminated only by the flashes of controversy over Calvinism and Arminianism. For it is this shining truth itself which sheds meaning on all his doctrines, and in light of which one best understands the nature of his evangelical theology. Always ^Klined with it of course is the kindred conviction that God desires to make holy those whom He loves, even those who are most abandoned to sin. But when we turn to the positive affirmations of Wesley's theology, we are forced to admit that his apprehension of God as love underlies all. It is distinctively Wesleyan, infinitely more than a mere modification of this or that system of historic theology. His doctrines are always pinned to it. Thus the doctrine of man asserts that God creates a human soul out of love; the doctrine of the Trinity is governed by the conviction that the three persons communicate love to man; the doctrine of God affirms that love "obligates" the other divine attributes, including God's will; the incarnation and atonement witness to the manner in which God has SO redeemingly loved the world; the Holy Spirit is conceived as a communication of love, which, as grace, achieves the entire work of salvation; justification is an experience in which divine justice is reconciled by divine love; adoption and the witness of the Spirit are distinctive marks of God's favour; sanctification is an experience in which the constraint of divine love impels the believer to conquer sin and cultivate the disposition and practice of love; and finally, Christian perfection represents the heights of salvation to which divine love can raise man.

It is ^{not} enough, however, to write that Wesley's doctrines are

founded on his intuition of the love of God only in the sense that the entire work of salvation is accomplished alone by grace. We must further point out Wesley's apprehension of a certain quality of that love, namely, that it confronts man with the promise of perfect salvation, and with an assurance that it is able to achieve this promise. When considered as grace, divine love does not only horizontally extend through and sustain salvation as conceived in Wesley's theology. It adds a further dimension, the soaring promise of perfection. Thus in his intuition that as grace, divine love communicates the promise and power of God to make man perfect, can we not say that Wesley evinces a profounder fidelity to the Christian conception of grace than Calvin? Although he refuses to grant that grace is irresistible, he yet magnifies its power to such an extent as to believe that it can make men perfect. He eagerly acknowledges that it is omnipotent, but he refuses to say that it is irresistible. His position is such as to escape the difficulties of Calvinism at the same time that it enables him to honour a truth integral to the Christian gospel, that God promises and is able¹ to make men perfect, a truth disavowed in Calvinism. Similarly, one feels that in his conception of the promissory character of grace he profoundly understands the essential nature of divine love. His rejection of Calvinism precisely at the point where the irresistibility of grace vitiates the universal promise the gospel makes to all men, can hardly be put down to less than genius.

Finally, in order to convey the manner in which Wesley's feeling for the love of God underlies and shapes all his thought,

1. Vide R.N.Flew, The Idea Of Perfection In Christian Theology p.244.

we must point to the form and content of this entire thesis, and write that Wesley's soteriology is conceived in response to the truth: "We love him because he first loved us" --¹
This is the sum of all religion ... None can say more".

It is this truth which impels some interpreters to attribute the power of Wesley's theology to a recovery of primitive Christianity, one of whom asserts that his insistence on the primacy of love in God marks his thought as distinctive in historical² theology. It is held, that as distinguished from the emphasis on revelation in Greek Christianity; on authority in the Roman Church; on God's sovereignty in Reformed theology; on institutionalism and sacerdotalism in Anglicanism; Wesleyan theology in a redemptive manner makes "... the love of God, and neither His will nor His³ wisdom, the ultimate explanation of His dealings with mankind". Its "... fundamental identity ... is the apprehension of the supreme and universal love of God as the essence of the gospel, of man as made for the fellowship with that love, of sin as withstanding it, of grace as atoning for sin and enthroning the love of God once⁴ more in the heart".

iii

We trust it has become clear that the effectiveness of Wesley's theology is in part attributable to the truths shared with Reformed and Arminian thought. In the final issue, however, the power of his thought to initiate the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century and to sustain the life of institutional Methodism, derives from his apprehension of God as holy, and as love, and from the conviction that these attributes prevail in the salvation of man.

1. Notes I John 4:19.

2. Vide J.S. Lidgett, A New History Of Methodism ii, 429-40.

3. Ibid. p. 434.

4. Ibid. p.436.

But we must further qualify this thesis and write that Wesley perceived that holiness and love must correlatively prevail in salvation. His genius lies in his ability to unite both truths in such a way as to honour each and violate neither. Together they support all his thought, the two beams on which he rears the structure of his soteriology. Though certainly not contradictory in their ultimate foundation in God, they are yet such as to provide a tension which sustains the superstructure in a balanced equilibrium. The relation of these two structural truths to the framework of doctrines accounts for a certain rigidity in Wesley's theology. It is significant that in one place or another he writes that every one of his doctrines is "fundamental" to his system of thought. Nothing can be omitted or shifted without endangering the balance of the whole. Hence his use of the phrases, "hair's breadth", "the very edge", etc. When, for example, Wesley's doctrine of the depravity of man - original sin - is denied as it was by the Deist, John Taylor, the pole of divine holiness is indirectly relaxed. The atonement of Christ loses its redemptive significance, the necessity of conversion is vitiated, the derivative doctrine of faith as trust in the merits of Christ is diluted, etc. Similarly, when the pole of divine love, grace, is presumed upon as it is in Quietism and Antinomianism, the efficacy of Wesley's theology to induce holiness is weakened.

We have chosen to speak of these two truths as the principles of moral realism and perfectionism. The terms are admittedly improvised and are not as satisfactory as one would wish. However,

they are meant to denote Wesley's acknowledgment that in the salvation of man God's nature is revealed as eminently holy and loving. His holiness is manifest in His hatred of the reality of sin, His love in the character of grace as promising and able to make the sinner perfect. In other words, when the truths ultimately rooted in God are apprehended by Wesley, they become translated into his theology in the principles of moral realism and perfectionism. In a broad, large-scale fashion, the tension between them is most dramatically seen in the contrast of the doctrine of sinful man with the doctrine of perfection. Wesley's accent on the depravity of man - equal to Calvin's - shows how vital his apprehension of God's holiness is. His accent on the promise and the power of grace as able to make man perfect - in a sense profounder than Calvin's - shows how vital his apprehension of God's love is. The tension between them is hardly less apparent throughout his theology. Choose almost any doctrine and one will observe that its significance is ultimately most intelligible in light of these two truths. This is to be observed in the doctrines of the atonement as a reconciliation of divine justice and love in the sacrifice of Christ; of the Spirit as a Spirit of grace and as Holy; of repentance as a knowledge of one's sinful self before the holiness of God, and of faith, which is joined with it, as a confidence in the promise and power of grace; of justification as an experience in which divine justice is satisfied by the merits of Christ and divine love forgives man his sins; of regeneration as necessary to inherent holiness; of sanctification as an increase in holiness through the exercise of "evangelical repentance" and faith; of perfection as salvation from sin and the practice

of love of God and man, though implying the continual need of Christ's atonement for sins of infirmities. Indeed, the interaction of the principles of moral realism and perfectionism, corresponding to divine holiness and love, is the nerve of Wesley's theology.

The manner in which this tension is sustained is illustrated in Wesley's inconsistencies. Before discussing these, however, we must remember that his apprehension of the truths of moral realism and perfectionism was largely instinctive. It was the result not of systematic speculation, but of a certain intuition of his mind and spirit. This instinct was in turn governed by a certain pragmatism in matters of doctrine. His theological procedure was, simply, to allow experience and reason to confirm or modify the a priori truths found in the Bible. Given such an intuitive apprehension of the truths of holiness and love, and such theological pragmatism, we may expect what we find in our study,—that Wesley is occasionally led into inconsistency in an effort to preserve the balance he felt should prevail between the principles of moral realism and perfectionism. Such difficulties arise from obeying his instinct at the expense of logical consistency, from having to enforce one of these truths by exaggerating it to the detriment of the other.

The first contradiction we encountered consists in the statement that the sin of Adam, without the sin which man personally commits, brings him death and condemnation;¹ and Wesley's conflicting statement that he does not assert that man stands condemned by the sin of Adam without his own sins.² The former is pure Calvinism. The latter implies personal moral responsibility.

1. Vide Notes Rom. 5:14.

2. Vide Works ix, 286 "The Doctrine Of Original Sin".

ity through preventing grace. This contradiction is an instance in which Wesley's sympathy with the Calvinist truth that man is sinful was insufficiently restrained by Arminianism.¹ This sympathy is but a manifestation of his intuition of the moral holiness of God, reflected in the doctrine of man's depravity. That he was led to modify this sympathy by a doctrine of preventing grace, signifies that God's love is conceived to be operative together with His holiness.

Wesley's anxiety to preserve the tension between moral realism and perfectionism is further seen in his difficulty over the activity of man in working out his salvation. This appears first in the problem of good works before justification, and in the dubious distinction between repentance as "remotely" necessary, and faith as "proximately" necessary. It appears also in the doctrine of perfection, where he simultaneously insists that the doing of all good works is indispensably necessary to prepare the believer for the act of full sanctification, and that nothing man can do is necessary. These contradictions spring on the one hand from a desire to be faithful to divine holiness through avoiding Quietism and Antinomianism by affirming the necessity of human responsibility; and on the other, from a desire to honour divine love as alone able to save and sanctify by denying any power or good to man.

Again, a change of opinion regarding the persistence of sin in believers is attributable to the same concern. In his early

1. Wesley's strong statement that man's will is so corrupted by his membership in Adam that he is morally predetermined, also reflects this difficulty. Except for the doctrine of preventing grace by which he rescues himself, his position is substantially Calvinist.

thought his enthusiasm for the power of grace led him to say that after justification the believer is quite delivered from sin. But when experience taught him differently and he saw the opportunity this position afforded to Antinomianism, he revised it to admit - in fact to insist - that though delivered from sin's guilt and power, believers are not delivered from its reality. This clearly reveals the principle of moral realism operating as an acknowledgment of the tenacious reality of sin, checking the exaggeration of perfectionism. For the same reason he relinquished a doctrine of final perseverance, a product of those early years when his enthusiasm for the power of grace was undeterred by a deeper apprehension of the resistant reality of sin even in those whom grace had perfected.

This brings us to the most striking illustration of the way Wesley is vitally concerned to preserve the tension between the truths that God is holy and that God is love. It is found in the doctrine of Christian perfection. Here Wesley asserts that although a believer is sinless in the sense that he commits no moral transgressions that interfere with his salvation, he yet needs the atonement of Christ for sins of infirmity, sins which are not moral sins as they do not involve the concurrence of the will. The logical difficulty of this position was discussed in chapter seven. It is understood only when we observe that underneath all, Wesley is torn by a desire to be faithful to the promise and power of grace, and by a desire to acknowledge the profound reality of ¹sin. His instinct prevails at the expense of consistency. That he could say at the same time that the

1. Vide R. Southey, The Life Of Wesley ii, 88.

perfected are saved from all sin, but that he would rather give up the doctrine of perfection than the necessity of Christ's atonement for the perfected, epitomizes his desire to honour the promise and the power of God's love, and the reality of His holiness.

It should not be our purpose to pass judgment on the contradictions of Wesley's theology. Our concern is to record them and to understand their derivation and significance. Yet we cannot refrain from pointing out that these very inconsistencies, springing from a deep apprehension of the nature of divine love and justice, certify the fidelity of Wesley's thought to Christian truth. That God is love, that God is just, lie at the heart of the Christian apprehension of God. Theology has always wrestled with the difficulty of elucidating the interrelation of these truths in a consistent and intelligible fashion. Wesley is no exception. Accordingly, when he is caught in a position that injures his apprehension either of the holiness or love of God, and at the cost of consistency rectifies it, we must not be too harsh in our condemnation.

That the majority of contradictions seem to arise from a too enthusiastic assertion of the power of grace to the detriment of holiness, or, to phrase it differently, from such an emphasis on God's love as temporarily to endanger His justice, suggests that if forced to err on either side Wesley preferred to err on behalf of God's love. This is instructive for us. It calls to mind the statement of W.B. Brash, that "... one of the characteristics of Wesley is that he is far too great to be deterred from preaching a truth because of its perils, for he well knew that the greater the truth the greater its danger ..."¹ This may well apply to the greatest truth of all,

1. Methodism pp.78-9.

that the God of Christ welcomes home with prodigal love lost sinners. Inevitably Wesley imperilled this truth, because he felt compelled to proclaim it.

iv

The tension between the principles of moral realism and perfectionism is rooted in Wesley's doctrine of God. The doctrine of the divine attributes is the formal embodiment of his intuitive apprehension that man's Redeemer is both holy and loving. These are the two facts, the two attributes of the divine character with which a sinner ultimately must deal. Because God is holy, sinful man must be made holy to share in life with Him. This transformation from sinfulness to righteousness constitutes salvation. The knowledge that God is holy necessitates the admission, the remission and the extinction of sin. These broadly correspond to Wesley's fundamental doctrines of sinful man, justification and sanctification, with their derivative doctrines. In these we find described the manner in which divine holiness operates in redemption, ultimately derived from the doctrine that God is holy. The same relation obtains between the doctrine of God's love and the operation of grace in redemption. The affirmation of the attribute of love in Wesley's doctrine of God, makes possible a doctrine of grace which offers to the unholy man the promise that God will work in him the holiness necessary to perfect communion with Him, at the same time that it convinces man that God is able to perform what He has promised. All the manifestations of grace bear this essential character. In whatever office it appeals to man, in the conviction of sin, in justification or sanctification, God's love is such that it asks to be received as promising and

able to work that holiness which fits man for uninterrupted communion with his Creator and Saviour.

Hence, just as Wesley conceives holiness and love to be inseparable though distinguishable in the doctrine of God, so are **they conceived to be correlative in the doctrines that elucidate their interaction in salvation.** The same intuitive apprehension of the nature of divine reality underlies all. We have tried to describe the character of this insight in the operations of moral realism and perfectionism. We may or may not have been successful. In any case, as one reflects upon the way this insight sustains and controls the structure of Wesley's soteriology, **one** will acknowledge that he has built on truth.

v

One cannot escape the conviction that this apprehension came to Wesley not primarily by way of reason, but through intuition and experience. It bears too great a vitality and underlies his thought too deeply to be considered merely the product of the discursive reason. It has the force and stamp of experience. It is the kind of truth on which a man builds not only his theology but also his life. It is not to be understood, however, that this truth was defined and modified only through Wesley's experience of the way it wrought in the lives of converts. When we write that Wesley was claimed by the truth that God is holy and loving, and that these attributes correlative prevail in the redemption of man, we mean that it was personally brought home to him in an experience of God in his own soul. This experiential knowledge of God characterized his entire ministry, but it is probable that it was first vitally entered into in his conversion. He writes:

" ... I know He was angry with me till I believed in the Son of His love; and yet this is no impeachment to His mercy, that He is just as well as merciful ... However, let us hold the precious truth fast in our heart as well as in our understanding; and we shall find by happy experience that this is to us the wisdom of God and the power of God". 1

Several scholars have studied Wesley's conversion experience and its effect on his life. Very few have accurately noted its profound effect on his formal theology. Of these, R.W.Dale seems to have seen most clearly the manner in which Wesley's experiential apprehension of the holiness and love of God in his conversion, provided the dynamic tension that became translated into his theology. He writes:

"He knew that God was merciful, ... yes; but God was just; and to Wesley the justice was as real as the mercy, and as essential an element and force in God's eternal, unchangeable, absolute life ... Justice condemned him if mercy forgave him. In his conception of God he could not suppress his justice, even in the presence of the strongest assurances of mercy. To him the two ideas, each necessary to the other, were irreconcilable contraries ... in John Wesley's personal discovery of the reality of the atonement - the synthesis of justice and mercy in the death of Christ - he found the inspiration and the force, which, under God, created Methodism". 2

These words extend our discussion of the distinctive character of Wesley's thought beyond the confines of the present section, and we now turn to a discussion of his theology as a theology of experience. It is this feature which provides the final, and in some ways the most important answer to the question asked as the theme of this essay.

vi

To say that Wesley's theology is a theology of experience

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1. Letters vi, 298-99, Feb. 7, 1778.
 2. From an address printed in the volume entitled: John Wesley: The Man, His Teaching, And His Work pp. 79-80.

means two things. It means, first, that in the formulation of his theology Wesley pursued an empirical method; his theology represents certain conclusions arrived at after investigating in an experimental manner the activity of God in the soul of man. It means, secondly, that Wesley built his thought on the view that religion is real when God is experienced; that man finds his truest knowledge of God in an experience of God in his own soul. The content of religious experience in the second sense is what is empirically studied in the first sense. In the first instance, we are dealing with a method applied to the formulation of theology. In the latter, we are dealing with a basic view of religion.

A discussion of Wesley's theology of experience in the first sense is hardly necessary in this essay. This thesis is not concerned with the manner in which Wesley evolved his theology except in so far as it assists us to understand the content of his thought. It may not be inappropriate to say, however, that some students see in his empirical method an anticipation of Schliermacher and William James. It concerns us here in only one

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1. The procedure by which Wesley arrives at a doctrine consists, first, in deriving it from and formulating it on the basis of scripture; second, in testing and modifying it in accord with experience; third, in testing it by reason; fourth, in testing it by tradition ("antiquity"). This might be said to be the ordo auctoritatis for Wesley. The distinctive feature of this method lies in the high place given to experience, and in the manner in which Wesley systematically appeals to experience. Vide Works v, 48 "Scriptural Christianity", ibid. v, 129, 135 "The Witness Of The Spirit", ibid. viii, 24 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", ibid. viii, 293 "Minutes Of Some Late Conversations", ibid. xiv, 207-08 "Preface To The Christian's Pattern", Letters ii, 108-09, July 31, 1747, ibid. ii, 262, June 17, 1746, ibid. ii, 290, June 11, 1747, ibid. ii, 383ff., Jan. 7, 1749, ibid. iv, 240, Apr. 23, 1764, ibid. v, 185-86, Mar. 16, 1770, ibid. vi, 129, Nov. 30, 1774.
 2. Vide H.B. Workman, A New History Of Methodism i, 27-8; G.C. Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley pp. 75ff.; M. Piette, La Reaction de John Wesley dans l'Evolution du Protestantisme pp. ix of the foreword, 650, 652.

respect. For in order to understand his view of religion as an experience of God, we must note a fundamental assumption underlying his empirical method. It is: the inward consciousness of man is valid for an apprehension of truth. This is what he means when he writes that "inward feeling" is the most infallible of all proofs; that "internal" evidence is the strongest proof of the truth of Christianity. On the basis of this assumption Wesley applies the empirical method to the facts of religious experience.

The nature of this assumption was discussed in chapter five.¹ We may remark that in granting to man the right to make for himself final affirmations about the nature of God on the basis of his own experience, Wesley reflects the Zeitgeist of the eighteenth century. Moreover, he reflects a heightened expression of the individualism whose inception (in religion) can be traced to the Lutheran Reformation.² If Protestantism be conceived as a protest for the right (and ability) of man individually to enter into communion with God, exclusive of mediation through priest, sacrament or saint, then Wesley's view of religion as experience is Protestantism carried to its logical culmination.³ One can perceive some ground for the remark that Wesleyanism is Protestantism at its purest.

A mere confidence in the validity of the human consciousness for experiencing the activity of God in the soul, however, is both

1. Vide supra pp. 177-78, 180.

2. Vide H.B. Workman, A New History of Methodism i, 9ff., 27.

3. This is also seen in a slightly different form in Wesley's insistence on "... the right of private judgment, which is indeed unalienable from reasonable creatures", and "... on which that whole Reformation stands". Works viii, 7 "An Earnest Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion", and ibid. v, 496 "Catholic Spirit", respectively. Vide also ibid. v, 478 "The Nature Of Enthusiasm", ibid. v, 479ff. "A Caution Against Bigotry", and the entire sermon "Catholic Spirit", ibid. v, 492 ff. Journal iii, 178, May, 29, 1745, ibid. iii, 243, June 7, 1746.

pointless and dangerous if it is not accompanied by a parallel confidence, that the immanent working of God in the human soul is such that it can be relied on and accredited as genuine. In other words, Wesley must not only assert that man's nature is such that he can experience God. He must also assert that God's nature is such that He can be reliably experienced. The reality which man may experience must be conceived as inclined and able to engage in communion with him.

This necessity is provided for in Wesley's doctrine of God as an immanent Spirit. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit as a communication of God's nature is placed at the centre of Wesley's theology. For this reason he qualifies its activity as immediate and perceptible, and vigorously resists the attempts of eighteenth century critics to mitigate this character. For the same reason he is led to declare that the Spirit is no less present and active in his day than it was at Pentecost.

When Wesley's view of the nature of the Holy Spirit is united with his view of the nature of the human consciousness, we have the ground of his theology as a theology of experience in the sense that concerns us, i.e. that religion is real when God is experienced. Wesley is able to say that man finds his truest knowledge of God through a perceptible experience of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the assuring witness of the Spirit represents the most distinctive expression of this idea. Even its significance, however, is absorbed in the greater truth that throughout salvation man is given an immediate, experiential knowledge of God through the Spirit. For this reason Wesley asserts that man can be saved without an explicit assurance of acceptance, but that he can never be saved without a perceptible experience of the Spirit.

The knowledge of God imparted by the Spirit corresponds to the divine attributes that prevail ⁱⁿ/redemption. One can say that as a communication of God's nature, the Spirit is felt to be both a Spirit of love and of holiness. As love, the Spirit is grace. Hence we find Wesley saying in the same breath that salvation is wrought alone by the Spirit and by grace. Every manifestation of preventing, convincing, justifying and sanctifying grace is identified with the Spirit. As salvation is only ever by grace, so is it only ever by the Spirit. For this reason Wesley insists that the Spirit be acknowledged as the source of salvation. Similarly, the Spirit as Holy is defined as an agency that is not only holy in itself but also as one that makes us so. The end of all its influences is stated to be holiness. In this sense its most distinctive function takes place in regeneration and sanctification, when the soul is purged of sin and filled with righteousness. Man is said to be born again of the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit. Hence, when Wesley accords a central place in salvation to the Spirit as a communication of God's holiness, he is insisting that religion as an experience bear a definitely ethical content.

We find, therefore, that the tension between holiness and love in Wesley's doctrine of God and in the derivative doctrines of salvation, is similarly apparent in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The latter, however, bears a unique character in that it is God's nature made immanent, the divine tension established in the soul of man. Man profoundly knows that God is love, and that God is holy. The revelation of divine justice and divine love in the cross, strikes upon his soul with mystery and meaning. The claim of God's holiness and love is pronounced again and again upon him. In responding with his entire being to this claim, mediated by the Spirit, man's salvation is achieved.

IV

We conclude this essay with a summary of the answer we are able to make to the question: Wherein lay the power of Wesley's theology to redeem and transform human life?

The answer is threefold. First, the power of Wesley's thought is due to the fidelity of his apprehension of God to Christ's revelation of God. When translated into theology, this apprehension shapes his doctrines in such a way as to honour the truth that the God of Christ is both holy and loving in the redemption of man. Considered as a whole, Wesley's theology is an elucidation of the manner in which the profound tension between divine holiness and love operates in the transformation of an "entirely depraved" sinner into a perfected son of God.

Secondly, the power of Wesley's thought is derived from his balanced synthesis of certain vital truths of historical theology, a synthesis constructed in accordance with the prior apprehension of God's love and justice. Wesley accepts the Reformed conceptions of sin and grace, but qualifies them (with the Arminian modifications we have cited,) precisely at the points where he perceives them to depart from Christ's revelation of divine holiness and love. He also accepts the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith because he conceives it to be faithful to that "pardoning love" which is at the "root of all". Yet he modifies it by an emphasis on pre-justification works, and insists that it be complemented by the doctrines of regeneration and sanctification, because justification by faith alone can imperil divine holiness. Similarly, he reasserts the doctrine of Christian perfection because it enjoins the holiness he feels divine love is able to

achieve in man. In short, the effectiveness of Wesley's theology partly consists in the fact that it is a balanced synthesis of certain cardinal affirmations of the Christian faith, sustained by the truths, -- that God is holy, that God is love.

The third and final explanation of the effectiveness of Wesley's thought lies in the fact, that what he affirms in his theology, also takes place, he believed, in human experience. Accordingly, when we write that his theology rests on the apprehension that divine love and holiness -- as revealed in Christ -- correlatively prevail in salvation, we may also write that man personally experiences divine love and holiness to deal with him in a saving way. Hence, when man responds to the experience of God's Spirit as grace and as holiness, Wesley believes that man is given the truest knowledge of God that it is possible to have. We may say, therefore, that in the experience of salvation through the Spirit, Christ's revelation of God becomes man's knowledge of God. Salvation achieves " ... the very end of his being, the knowledge of God in Christ".¹

In the last analysis these three points become one. The effectiveness of Wesley's theology lies in the fact that the truths of which it is composed are the structural truths of Christianity. Wesley's apprehension of the manner in which God's love and holiness transact salvation, accurately corresponds to the way in which they have^{been} found actually to transact salvation. This is to say, that Wesley is faithful to the Christian revelation of God.

1. Works vi, 25 "Wandering Thoughts".

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